

Unexpected rains and hail hit growing regions of Santiago, Curicó and Linares during the weekend, damaging some agricultural crops, with cherries among the most affected.

Iván Marambio, president of the Chilean Fruit Exporters Association (ASOEX), and Jorge Valenzuela, president of the National Federation of Fruit Producers (Fedefruta), said that the damages registered so far are limited.

"Although it is still too early to provide more detailed data, according to information from our technical teams in the field, so far the damage caused by the rain, and in some cases hail, would be limited according to region, commune, locality and plantation," said Marambio.

The executive also said that the effects differ from one producer to another in the same area.

Valenzuela said that in the central part of the country, between the Metropolitan and Maule regions, one in five fruit growers had experienced some degree of damage to their crops. Preliminary estimates of damage in affected orchards do not exceed 10% of early varieties, he said.

"That does not mean that other producers will not have greater losses," Valenzuela said, "because this type of spring rains and hailstorms are treacherous and fall in a very unpredictable way in a territory, sparing many, but being cruel to others.

Javier Contesse, general manager of Alegría Foods told FreshFruitPortal.com that the situation is difficult to quantify since the rain was limited to specific areas.

"In several fields, fruit fell from the trees which generated losses of 50% or 100%. The most affected fields are being evaluated. What is certain is that in places with fruit with color and size and where 5 millimeters of rain fell, there are losses. The most affected fruits were cherries, and to a lesser extent blueberries," said Contesse.

Mario Gaete, founder of Comercializadora Don Germán and Sociedad Agrícola Gaete & Fischer, located in Linares, says that he will have losses of 15% to 20% in the production of cherries..

Lorena Pinto, Product Manager of Pomaceous and Cherry Trees in ANA Chile, said that anti-hail netting is not used in Chile, as it's not a common weather phenomena.

Regarding official data and damage estimates, both the ASOEX's Cherry Committee and

Blueberry Committee says they will release figures in the coming days.

At the same time, Fedefruta is working on a survey for producers on crop damage after the November rains and hail.