

**By *Andrés Rodríguez, Chile Agricultural Attaché in the USA.***



After more than 20 years of negotiations, Chile has reached the last mile of the long-awaited Systems Approach for table grape exports to the United States, with the publication of its proposed rule in the Federal Register on October 17.

As with any formal process for a proposed rule in the U.S., it must go through a 60-day public comment period, which in this case ends on December 16. This is so that the sanitary authority can then review the comments, respond to them and publish a final version in the Federal Register, thus finally be in force.

This agreement will allow importers in the U.S. to receive table grapes from specific areas with low pest prevalence of the Atacama, Coquimbo and Valparaíso regions and that meet all the demanding requirements established. In those eligible areas, Methyl bromide fumigation will be replaced with different actions in origin that the Systems Approach contemplates.

The main measures include the registration of growers, who must demonstrate their compliance with the requirements. Also, the use of traps in orchards, permanent monitoring, joint inspection in origin between the two countries, among other actions to ensure the export of a safe product.

The U.S. is the main destination market for Chilean table grapes, with 30% of the volume exported by Chile in the 2021-22 season. This has consolidated its position as the main supplier of this product for the North American market, arriving in counter-season, with a greater supply of new varieties that fit the tastes of American consumers.

This important agreement will not only benefit Chilean growers, but also the entire supply chain in the U.S., including ports, logistics operators, importers, retailers, and of course, the consumer.

This new alternative to fumigation is not expected to change the volumes of Chilean grape exports to the U.S. but will mainly have a positive impact on the quality of the product that will be available in the market.

This alternative will even have a positive impact on table grape growers in the U.S., since we are in counter-season, they will be able to start their own season with a stable demand throughout the year.

In addition to the effectiveness and success of a proven tool such as the Systems Approach, which led to a technical agreement between the parties, we are living in a moment in which Chile and the U.S. share a common concern for the environment, where the search for alternatives to methyl bromide fumigation is key.

We hope to soon realize this long-awaited goal for Chilean agriculture, for the U.S. consumer, and for our environment.