

MAGAZINE

ASOCIACIÓN GREMIAL DE PROCESADORES Y EXPORTADORES DE CIRUELAS SECAS DE CHILE

The meeting was held on October 22 at the Grand Monticello Convention Center

With an attendance of around 300 people including producers, processors and exporters, as well as suppliers and guests from the Argentine plum sector, a Chilean industry that it has become the world's main exporter of this fruit.



An event held in Monticello, VI Region, and hosted by the Association of Dried Plum Processors and Exporters of Chile, Chileprunes, led by its president Pedro Pablo Díaz. On the occasion, the union leader reinforced the idea of continuing to work intensely jointly, publicly and privately, to take care of the markets that have opened up (China, Mexico and Europe), and return to one that is of great interest: India.

In this sense, Díaz emphasized how positive it would be to return to the gigantic Indian market, where there is only one fumigation-type problem (methyl bromide requirement versus phosphine). There, he pointed out, he spent 7 years cultivating, building a message about the benefits that dried plums offer in terms of health, "the argumentative load has already been done, the ball is in the penalty spot and the goal must be scored by the part policy".

He also highlighted the possibilities that we have as a country to continue leading global exports of dried plums, while the United States has a very strong internal consumption that takes most of what is produced; France did the same, exporting a smaller amount to neighboring countries and North Africa; while Argentina has presented climatic problems for several years in a row, which reduce its productive capacity, exporting most of it to its neighbor Brazil. "So the world is being attacked by us, in a significant way."

On behalf of the government, there was Ignacio Fernández, general director of ProChile, who highligh-



ted the interest in addressing the Indian issue, and continuing to work jointly between the public and private sectors, highlighting the food sector, which creates 500,000 direct jobs. Regarding the export of dried plums, the expansion of markets stands out, having gone from 70 to 81 destination countries in a few years, and "where significant opportunities have been presented for SMEs."

Iván Marambio, president of Asoex, invited to work together, among all the unions that face similar challenges and have similar needs related to the lack of water, climate change, logistical challenges, market opening and



competition. In this sense, he highlights the approval of the TPP11 "which allows us to compete on the same field, and with the same conditions." For his part, Cristián Allendes, president of the SNA, called for concern about the quality of the fruit produced "always; in a stable manner over time", as well as promotion. He emphasized water infrastructure as a priority at the country level and where it should not be taken for granted that it will rain again in winter to save the situation.

Sebastián Valdés, director of companies and with 22 years of experience in various agri-food sectors, points out that "the pandemic taught us how fragile our supply chain is, and reminded us that our product offer is not such until we manage to put it on the market." gondola of a supermarket, or in the shopping cart of an e-commerce. Logistics must not be taken for granted and you must have a strategic position to address it, in order to obtain a rate/risk ratio appropriate to the profile of each exporter".

after the sustainable

In this EXPO, the issue of sustainability was also addressed. Kelly Witkowski, director of the Sustainability and Natural Resources Program of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture, Costa Rica, reinforces that people not only ask, but also demand that food-producing companies make changes and improvements in this matter. She highlights 3 key points: first, the success of an industry is linked to sustainability;

second, it is not something binary, of blacks and whites, it requires constant improvement; and third, all the actors, in the most diverse markets and industries, can guide a path towards sustainability. She also considers it necessary to assume the standards that are being demanded internationally to remain competitive in the market, build trust, be proactive and identify a path to continue improving practices, among others.

Since 2022, Chileprunes has been working together with the Foundation for Agrarian Innovation (FIA, agency of the Chilean Ministry of Agriculture)



and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA, the OAS specialized agency for agriculture), to develop and implement a sustainability standard for the sector, with extensive validation by the different actors that are part of this agro-industrial sector.



Agronomic management trends in the production of Prunes D'Agen

Pablo Campino, member of the Technical Committee of Chileprunes and head of the Piruela D'Agen Program of the Pacific Nut Company, spoke at the EXPO Ciruelas Secas 2023, referring to six major issues that must be hard-working to achieve what the producer is looking for in terms of productivity, profitability, quality and sustainability of the fruits that leave the orchard:

"In new plantings, pruning, foliar alternatives, soil management, irrigation and water management and, finally, in harvest strategies, there are concrete alternatives to improve productivity, quality and condition of the orchards, reducing costs and improving yields," he says. In the first point, of the new plantations, you can bet on a higher density. Indeed, while the traditional system considers a separation between each tree of 3.5 and 5 meters, which gives the possibility of 571 plants per hectare, we can go on to have a dual purpose production (fresh and dry) with separations of 3, 50 meters x 1.25 meters which gives 2,286 plants per hectare. Another relevant point in productivity has to do with pruning. "The main function of having an orchard with quality potential, of the caliber of this season and the one that follows; it is to do a well-done pruning, ideally as manual as possible". And he adds: "the benefits that we are going to have with a good pruning translate into production, which can be more than 20% of the income and when we skimp on pruning, we are mortgaging the orchard; because the benefit will undoubtedly be greater". A third point has to do with foliar alternatives. Some producers are using algae extract in their foliar applications, which contribute to the development of the fruit. For Campino, the use



of these products helps to have better fruit set and retention, increasing productivity per hectare. "With the development of fruits, we are going to increase cell elongation and it will allow us to have a larger caliber, therefore, better profitability."

As for soil management, it winks at plant covers that generate 4 great benefits: Improves infiltration, provides organic matter, fixes carbon and saves herbicides.

He also commented that the use of biofertilizers is being increasingly used, since they can be generated in the same orchard with the worm. "It is about generating biofertilizers in the fields, where a vermicomposting pool is installed that is injected into the irrigation booth, generating biofertilizer. And this is applied directly to the orchard throughout our season, which allows us to lower the costs of traditional fertilization progressively over time and at the same time we are sustainable." In addition, savings are generated in traditional fertilizers, the soil microbiota, the vigor of the plants, the soil structure are improved, and organic matter and root development are provided to the orchard. If we have healthy soil, we will have healthy plant and healthy fruit, he says. A fifth key factor, about which a lot may have been said, is that of Irriga-

tion and Water Management. Key in the matter is to make a water balance of the field, along with having storage tanks, wells and covering channels. Consider underground irrigation that saves between 30% to 50% of water. Campino points out that plum trees require 7,000 mt3/hectare per year, and in production, 1 liter/sec for one hectare of fruit.

He finally made reference to harvesting strategies. "The focus of a good harvest is a well-directed strategy to achieve well-finished fruit, so that the greatest amount of fruit is harvested at the right time. I mean 22 to 24 degrees Brix, hopefully more, but we don't have losses due to falling fruit or it is in a state where it is very soft." An alternative in the harvest is to carry out two passes where the greatest amount of fruit can be collected. Another option is to spend three to five days later with the machine, so that you can remove what is left and then finish going over. "With the objective of achieving the highest amount of soluble solids, to have firm fruit," he adds.

Productive analysis of prunes season in Chile

Juan Pablo Sotomayor, technical manager of Frutexsa, a leading company in shipping nuts from this country to the world, was one of the speakers at the 10th edition of the Expo Ciruelas Secas, an instance where the main procedures that take place in the field were analyzed. field and the steps to follow for the development of the sustainability of the industry.

On the occasion, he started by pointing out that the total production of Chilean plums in 2022 was 103,000 tons, but that our potential is between 105 to 110 thousand tons. Between fresh fruit, discard and loss there were 20 thousand tons, while the remaining 82.6 thousand tons was available for the industry in dehydrated plum.

Currently, there are 12,530 hectares planted with European plum, where



Region VI represents 68.7% of the total (for this reason, the Dried Plum EXPO, organized by the Association of Dried Prune Processors and Exporters of Chile, Chileprunes, is carried out in this area).

Regarding new plantations, he pointed out that there are no plants available in the nurseries, and there is an estimate of planting of 700 to 1,000 hectares for the period 2023-2024.

After these macro figures, Juan Pablo Sotomayor addressed the issue of pruning, flowering, harvesting and drying, among others.

For the Frutexsa expert, good pruning translates into good yields and that generates good calibres. "The year 2022, in terms of cold, was very good and that allowed us to enter almost perfect flowering. And that meant that 80% of the orchards had fairly regular flowering. It was more advanced than the previous year."

In the season there was a greater availability of pruners, although this did

not prevent a sustained increase in the cost of pruning, \$1,000 to \$1,200 average per plant / contractor. There was also better load regulation in search of improving calibres and an increasing use of "sprayable paints" based on trichodermas to the detriment of the use of traditional paints.

Regarding flowering, this was ahead of normal in date in practically all areas, and there were cool temperatures throughout this period.

Of course, it asks to take into account some threats that hang over fruit trees: aphids (considered in health programs), kids (which eat the roots) and a bird, the Chirigua (which eats the flower buds).

The start of the harvest was budgeted between February 6 and 10. Harvest volumes and sizes were generally within expectations, with excellent fruit quality and good sugar levels. Likewise, the drying conditions were very favorable.

In the future, the technical manager at Frutexsa, general, commented that "we are

In a super good agricultural season, field management is aware, we are enjoying a good business, we must take care of it and work well.

That it can change to the extent that the producing countries begin to have their normal productions and the prices can be different; so we cannot forget quality, we have to produce well".



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Interview with Chileprunes on Radio Agricultura, Agro program

The executive director of Chileprunes, Pedro Acuña, in an interview with Verónica Díaz, host of Radio Agricultura's El Agro, refers to the nutritional benefits of prunes.

It highlights the multiple benefits that its consumption provides by having fiber, minerals, vitamins, and "muscle and bone development, this being the last in international investigations. It has been detected that it brings a great benefit for osteoporosis theme. This, apart from what is already known, as an antioxidant, helps the intestinal flora, heart issues, among others.

In addition, the executive highlights the great versatility it has to consume itself, either as a dessert or linked to salads or savory dishes. Faced with all these benefits, even so, Chileans have low internal consumption of this superfood.



Economic prospects for Chile and the D'Agen prunes

The fruit grower and economist from the P. Universidad Católica de Chile, Juan Pablo Subercaseaux was one of the exhibitors at the 10th. EXPO Dried Plums, organized by Chileprunes, expressing what is coming for the industry in the short term.

One of the most relevant macroeconomic elements, for the entire export and import industry, is the projection of the exchange rate, said the speaker at the event that took place on Wednesday, March 22, at the Monticello events center, in Region VI. , meeting point for Chilean plum growers.

Regarding the price of the dollar, which currently stands at over \$800 pesos, Juan Pablo Subercaseaux envisions a rise in 24 months, which will place it close to \$1,000, which will benefit exporters. This forecast is based



on the higher interest on State debt, less investment, more "normal" copper values and due to the effect that changes in interest rates would have, where the United States is on the rise and Chile, which today has very high, it will go down gradually.

All these issues add to the global and national political and economic uncertainty, which has been maintained over time. As an example, Chile went, in 13 years, from having almost 20% of GDP in savings, to the current situation where there is 20% debt (a change of 40% of GDP), a new reality that forces us to allocate a percentage of our GDP to interest rate payments. Another macro issue, relevant for the fruit industry -and to a certain degree of less relevance for dried plums, which are highly mechanized- is the increase in prices and the availability of labor. The expert anticipated that some 500,000 people will return to work in Chile in the course of 2023, of which 8% should go to the agricultural sector, taking pressure off wages.

Subercaseaux made a bit of history: in 2014 the shortage of labor in Chile was relevant, but that year the Immigrants began to arrive, close to a million, in 6 years. This 5% increase in the national population had varied and marked changes in society. Initially, between 15-20% of seasonal agricultural workers were foreigners, with around 80,000 workers, a figure that today is estimated at only 60,000. They are mainly Bolivians, Peruvians and Haitians. Venezuelans, the main foreign colony in Chile, do not have a significant presence in agriculture, since they had high levels of training and were able to earn wages as middle managers and in permanent jobs. entering the area Regarding plums, the economist referred to two years with high international prices, which significantly exceed historical averages. This is mainly caused by lower supply in producing countries, caused, among others, by frost in France. "You have to be clear, it is a short-term issue, and that when the international situation is regularized, we will return to normal prices. This is a very important factor when

making growth projections for new hectares, in addition to the fact that we are talking about a small global export and import market, without much growth." Regarding fresh exports, the economist pointed out that it is a market for a few. In order to have good returns on fresh exports to China, it is necessary to have microclimates that allow brix degrees to be reached very early. In addition to being very well located, cyanamide applications are required to advance its flowering and harvest. Only the first weeks of exportation achieve interesting returns that allow paying for a very expensive harvest and doing good business. Fresh fruit can get good prices, but its fluctuations from year to year make it less attractive. China does not give certainties on the matter. Neither can all the production be exported, since adequate color and brix degrees are required. Return to producer is always a question mark.

In short, it is not an alternative for orchards in late zones and/or where there are no procedures to advance flowering. These were the words of Juan Pablo Subercaseaux at an event that returned to the public after three years, organized by Chileprunes, a union that brings together more than 70% of the exports of said fruit.

Ausiciadores Expo ciruelas secas 2023



SOUTHERNSOLUTIONS



Care. Protection. Quality.



indicators of the Chilean industry April 2023

volume exported
8.759.560 kilos



amount exported
34.772.438 US\$ FOB.



Main markets;



These 10 countries represent 70% of the volume inside of the 61 destinations for Chilean prunes to date.

