

# MAGAZINE

ASOCIACIÓN GREMIAL DE PROCESADORES Y EXPORTADORES DE CIRUELAS SECAS DE CHILE

## Quality and diversification of the markets: the challenges the prune industry has to face

Main results of “EXPO Ciruelas Secas – 2025 (EXPO Prunes – 2025).



With a large attendance of producers, processors and exporters, among other actors of the market, this Wednesday, March the 19th took place the 12th Expo Prunes at Monticello Conference Center, VI Region and coincided with the 20 anniversary of the **Asociación Gremial de Procesadores y Exportadores de Ciruelas Deshidratadas de Chile** (Professional Association of Processers and Exporters of Prunes), Chileprunes, which was hosting this big meeting of the Chilean prune industry that, today, is the main world exporter of this fruit.

The common thread of the event was the attributes the prune needs to assert itself in the markets. “Never before we have been closer to the final consumer and this is related to the unequivocal, unbreakable commitment with the quality of our product”, emphasized Chileprunes’s president, **Pedro Pablo Díaz** during his welcome speech to the attendants.

This message was corroborated by Antonio Walker, president of the **Sociedad Nacional de Agricultura** (National Society of Agriculture), who, from the country’s point of view, emphasized that Chile must become an eco-food power. “We want to make a difference from the rest of the world in the way we produce more than in how much we produce”, said the president. But this entails “having a more consistent quality as a condition to have a more homogeneous product nor only standing out for the quality and condition of the fruit but also for the flavor it has”, he emphasized.

Pedro Pablo Díaz valued the kind of agriculture we are carrying out and the good results gotten in agronomical terms highlighting that it is the result of a continuous effort of the industry. “I do not know any Chileprunes associated company that is not, nowadays, investing in their productive plants; they are aware that the future of our sector is having a product designed for the consumer’s palate”, he said.

He also pointed that the Chilean prune, besides gaining space in destinies as India, is soon going to be present in other markets. “We are talking about Indonesia in the very short term”.

On the other hand, the director of the **Oficina de estudios y políticas Agrarias, ODEPA** (Office for Agricultural Studies and Policies) Andrea García, narrowed down that in an increasingly volatile world the public-private work of the sector must be strengthened promoting a sustainable export agenda. “With Chileprunes we have had a very successful agenda for many years in the creation of sustainability standards in environmental, economic and social areas; we have worked together to produce with more fairness and better sustainability”, she

said. For its part, the director of ProChile, **Lorena Sepúlveda**, pointed out that the Chilean prune was commercialized in 78 destinations in Europe, Asia and North America totalizing exports for more than US\$ 250 millions. “This is an example of diversification and a big lesson on not to put all eggs in one basket. This sector has made its own our invitation, as ProChile, to send our products to more markets, thus generating more opportunities”, she highlighted.

Another example of public-private effort carried out to put the Chilean prune in the world is the project to create a certification of sustainability of the product. The executive director of Chileprunes, **Pedro Acuña** revealed the scopes of this initiative promoted within the framework of the program Chile Origen Consciente and (Chile Conscientious Origin) developed together with the **Instituto Interamericano de Cooperación Agrícola, IICA**, (Interamerican Institute for Agricultural Cooperation) and the **Agencia de Sustentabilidad y Cambio Climático, ASCC**, (Agency for Sustainability and Climate Change) and Odepa.

“The way was very collaborative. We made a diagram of the actors, more than 600, counting the producers, processors, exporters and other important institutions. We formed several working committees and an articulated governance that allowed us to advance in executive and technical themes”, he explained.



### Perception of what is quality

Nonetheless, despite the advances there are a lot of challenges. One of them is the harsh competition from the producers united at the **California Prune Board**, theme addressed by **Sebastián Valdés**, director of family and agro-industrial companies; he highlighted that the California prune often gets 40% price premium thanks to a strategy focused in improving the quality of the fruit, specially the calibers, prioritizing the added value over the natural product and investing much more in promotion than their adversaries.

He mentioned, as well, that the United States is tackling markets where the final consumers have higher income such as Great Britain, Canada, Italy or Japan.

“A consumer will pay more for a product that is perceived as better, even though it may not really be so. This is the key of the matter; using adequate promotion the consumer, facing two exact products, will pay more if he perceives one as better than the other”, said Valdés.

The director of SENADUCA and quality assurance consultant Claudia Pinochet accounted for the technical variables that will allow to reach a final product that will conquer the markets saying that the first step is agree on what



is understood by quality. “It is a safe product, that is to say it does not harm or produce illnesses to the consumer, it complies with what was promised to the customer from the nutritional and sensory point of view”, said the expert. “Some details that seem insignificant must be improved; sometimes we go from one point to the other and we forget the intermediate steps and that gets us into trouble”, she added, highlighting then that if a customer was promised a sweet prune he cannot receive a tasteless fruit. “To avoid this is quality”, Pinochet declared.

And as it was expected, at the event the main statistic data of the 2024 season and the projections for 2025 were made known; this was in charge of Juan **Pablo Sotomayor, Frutexa production manager**. During his speech, he said the production estimates for this year could be around 100,000 tons; 14% will be destined to fresh product and the rest, more or less 86,000 tons will be available for prunes.

#### Innovation and new markets

EXPO prunes 2025 included the participation of **Sumit Saran, director of SS Associates**, consulting and marketing food company specialized in launching foreign foods in India; he is in charge of promoting prunes, activity led by Chileprunes since 2024. The executive spoke about the opportunities India offers for the prune aiming at the fact that India has 1,400 million inhabitants, even though, he said “that is not the target. The target is about 300 million consumers who are the growing middle class”.

“India is not a country, it is a continent with an economy strong and resilient to the ups and downs of global economy made up by a high income and very connected young population that feels part of the global village”, he described adding that after the pandemic a great demand for healthy snacks has been observed.

“This is why the more we educate about prunes and its benefits the bigger the demand will be. If we strongly promote during 3 or 5 years, I think India will be what China was 5 years ago”, he insisted.

**Ricardo González, producer manager at Frusan** spoke for his part about the perspectives of the fresh product emphasizing the need that the fruit be consistent, remembering that the final consumer has several buying options: grapes, blueberries, peaches and an endless number of sub-tropical fruits.



“Then, our product has to be perfect”, he stated, narrowing down that nowadays more than 50 Chilean actors are exporting prunes to China, which in itself is not a problem. “The challenge is to make the 50 exporter companies excellent companies”, he stressed. It should be noted that the event included the outstanding participations of founder and **president of Innspiral, Iván Vera** who, through several examples, showed that innovation is a safe bet to add value to the products, even agricultural products and of **D’Agen plum specialist Hugo González** whose presentation was focused in making better known practices regarding sustainable plant nutrition that allows to improve productivity in an important manner.

That is how hundreds of attendees to the 12th EXPO Prunes went home with a complete idea regarding the Chilean and international Plum industry with the more technical information about orchards to the commercial information about present and future markets for our exporters. You are invited to the 13th version in 2026...See you!

## Chilean prune exportations during 2024: US\$ 255,119.8 million

The shipments were made to 78 countries, two more than in 2023, amounting China a big relevance representing one third of the exports in terms of volume (MT) and a fourth in terms of amount in dollars FOB.

Exports of Prunes; January – December 2024			
N°	Country	Volume (Kg)	FOB in US\$
1	China	29.798.043	63.718.499
2	Poland	8.117.633	21.070.238
3	Mexico	7.456.378	19.818.940
4	Germany	4.409.169	15.702.639
5	USA	4.257.441	25.002.264
6	UK	3.500.403	9.717.669
7	Turkey	3.440.473	9.649.437
8	Italy	3.225.182	11.397.350
9	Spain	2.972.985	12.904.685
10	Australia	2.747.091	9.410.432
Source: Customs	Total Exports (78 countries)	88.897.082	255.119.752

Chilean prune exportations, a super food that reached 78 countries during 2024- two more than in 2023- reached 88,897 metric tons (MT) corresponding to US\$ 255,119.7 million.

Of these totals, most part of the shipments were to China, which increased its presence and relevance regarding previous years. In fact, the volume of exports to the Asian giant reached 29,798 MT representing a third of the total shipments which is equivalent to US\$ 63.7 million, that is to say a fourth of the total amount. There is a great distance from China to the second and third prune shipment destinations: Poland with 8,117 MT (US\$ 21 million) and Mexico with 7,456.3 (US\$19.8 million).

Chile, the world main prune exporter, had among its main markets Germany, The United States, The United Kingdom, Turkey, Italy, Spain and Australia. The main Latin-American destinations after Mexico are Peru, Colombia and Ecuador. This information was given by Customs, a Chilean governmental agency.

As of February 2025

During the first months of the year China has kept its importance in volume and returns.

Regarding volume, the Chilean prune exports have amounted 2,606.9 MT, which represents a fourth of the total; regarding amounts of money, it reached US\$ 5,983 million, that is 20.12% of the total; this represents a slight decrease in percentage terms of the importance of this country in relation to de quantities seen during 2024.

The total exported volume during the first months of the year is 10,129.2 tons equivalent to US\$ 29.730 million.

Europe is still important because Poland, Germany, The United Kingdom and Italy are the next most relevant destinations regarding volumes. Then, to complete the list of the top 10 we find Mexico, The United States, Australia, Spain, and Lithuania; the last one is a novelty in the ranking.

Thanks to the area planted with European plums, which is more than 13 thousand hectares, Chile has a production bordering 110,000 MT per year; from this

amount an important percentage is destined to fresh fruit to be sold to China according to Chileprunes, Asociación Gremial de Procesadores y Exportadores de Ciruelas Deshidratadas de Chile (Professional Association of Processers and Exporters of Prunes), guild that concentrates more than 70% of the prune exports.



## Investing in added value and promotion: lessons learned from the California strategy

In the context of the 12th EXPO Ciruelas Secas 2025 (EXPO Prunes), Sebastián Valdés, companies' director, had the opportunity of exposing about a phenomenon that causes concern in the local industry: the prune from California gets recurrently a price 40% higher than the fruit produced in Chile.

"They call it market premium and they say it happens because there is a value perceived by the consumer that justifies this premium and it is associated to the offer of a better product and to a work focused in promoting the benefits of such product; this impacts the consumer's perception in their favor", said the agro-industrial and family companies' director.

But, is this thesis correct? He gathered it is, and he did after analyzing in detail the strategy developed by the producers from California in their efforts in the agricultural aspects as well as in the marketing aspects.

"The evidence is that on the level of export prices and on the producer's return this premium exists", asserted Valdés. There are several reasons that explain this:

The first cause is the constant quest to achieve a bigger size plum. "If we compare the plum from California to the one from Chile, there is a clear difference in the size of the fruit and the difference is big. This is a first check", he pointed out.

He also highlighted the uniformity and consistency they have achieved. "During the last 18 years, more or less, they have invested around US\$ 15 millions in investigation to improve these aspects. So, there is an effort by the association to advance in this regard", he added.

### Added value

Additionally, California has had a clear focus towards an offer with "added agro-industrial value" to put in the supermarket gondola a pitted, tenderized and, in a great proportion, already packed with its own brand product. By contrast, a great percentage of the Chilean production stays in natural condition.

"During recent years around 46% of the product from California is sold in packets; in other words, it is indented for retail market with a logistic chain. There is the added value and the brand making", said Valdés.

California, additionally, allocates a lot of resources to promote its product in destination with higher purchasing power, mainly Japan, Canada and Italy and also United Kingdom and China.

"All the United States target markets have high per capita income. And,

obviously, a market with high income consumers is more willing to pay higher prices for products that offer added value. **If we compare to Chile, the per capita income of the markets of California doubles ours**", he remarked.

The perception of the attributes of a product can improve investing in promotion, an item California has managed skillfully.

Sebastián Valdés specified that between 2015 and 2024 the California Prune Board invested US\$ 67.4 millions in marketing actions developed in international and also national markets; this amount does not include additional resources allocated to investigation and development.

"A consumer will pay more for something he perceives a different thanks to promotion even though it could not be necessarily in objective terms", pointed out the economist.

But Valdés warned that the advances from California do not represent a fight from David against Goliath. "The industries are similar in size; non the less, they invest around US\$ 11 millions per year in promotion and investigation, approximately 20 times the budget of Chileprunes; this clearly generates a bias that favors them", he stated.

### Competitive advantages

Non the less, he said that Chile is in an excellent position to face the US challenge thanks to competitive advantages "that California cannot match"; for once our productivity per hectare more than doubles that of California.

But he urged us not to stay in the comfort zone and to move forward in the effort to leave behind the primary industry stage and to be aware of the dependency on China, "which is a processing country and is taking a big part of our offer without added value, only the fresh fruit".





## Season 2024/2025 full analysis made at the Chileprunes event

Juan Pablo Sotomayor, Frutexa technical manager, during Expo Ciruelas Secas 2025 (Expo Prunes) gave us again key information and figures of national and international markets about producer countries, the season, cultivated hectares and details related to the Chilean prune among many other subjects.

In his report, the agronomist said, at the event organized by Chileprunes that, during 2024, the total plum production in Chile was 110,000 MT; from this amount the equivalent of 20,500 MT of dry product was used as fresh fruit and almost all of it went to China while the rest, 89,500 MT, was used for the drying industry. Regarding the size, the caliber was 80 (units per pound) as an average during 2024.

Regarding prices, the specialist added that in the last 5 years (the period from 2020 to 2024) with caliber 70, we have had an average price of US\$ 2,05 per kilo. For the same caliber the average during the last 25 years has been US\$ 1.4 per kilo.

Chile has 13,351 cultivated hectares with European plum; the VI Region has the most hectares, 9,700, equivalent to 72% of the total. This figure is not minor and it is obtained after updating the information regarding the VI Region from which we only had information until 2021; this explains how we have exceeded 13 thousand cultivated hectares. In three years, this region increased in 1,098 hectares the land planted with European plum (being Santa Cruz, Lolol, Peralillo and Palmilla very relevant). The second region with more cultivated hectares is the Metropolitan Region with 18.5% of the total and the third is the VII Region with 7.8%.

### Other three big producers

And, how did the other big prune producers do?

Argentina is decreasing the cultivated hectares; during the 2023/2024 season it had 8,600 hectares after its peak of 16,000 hectares during the 2014/2015 season. Its prune production reached 38,000 MT in 2024. For 2025 they project 18,000 MT.

The United States has also been decreasing the productive hectares during the last five years. If we only compare the last two years, during 2024 they obtained 70,000 MT while the previous year they obtained 82,000 MT. We should remember that last year the area suffered an extreme heat wave from the end of June until mid-July impacting the Sacramento and San Joaquín valleys with record high temperatures.

The other big international competitor, France, as of last August -considered the end of the season in the northern hemisphere- had 29,000 MT prune production after having, during 2023, 40,000 MT. During 2024, its cultivated area was 10,700 hectares including conventional and organic plantations, the same amount that in 2023 but with a reduction in the number of producers (a fall from 1,800 to 800 producers in the last 20 years); those producers increased the number of hectares per capita.

### Weather, production and projection aspects

Regarding the weather, we can say we had a good 2024 in relation to hours of cold weather and amounts of rain. There was a good quantity of cold hours, unlike last year, without significant frosts during the spring and a good amount of rainfall, despite a couple of heavy rains in September which affected some areas of the VI Region. The pruning started with a good projection of cold hours and rains. The blooming season was normal, less abundant than the previous year, and we had an early sprouting almost at the same time as the blooming. The harvest started between February 10th and February 17th; it began with 20° Brix and higher and the "quality of the fruit was excellent and so were the conditions for drying", added Sotomayor. The calibers were between 65 to 70 units per pound and the preliminary conversions from fresh to dry product in ovens ranged from 3 to 3.3:1 and the sun conversions were from 3.2 to 3.4. And some projections for the next season....

Regarding size, for this 2024/2025 season we are expecting a better caliber, 70 (units/pound) on average.

In terms of production, for 2025 it is expected a total of 100,000 MT; the equivalent to 14,000 MT of dry product will be exported as fresh fruit and the rest, the 86,000 MT, would be available for the prune industry correcting the initial production estimate from November 2024 with a 10% downward revision.



## Seeking to differentiate with sustainable quality standards

**In a public-private effort to strengthen the international positioning of the Chilean prune, a certification that guarantees that the product has been cultivated under standards that combine quality with sustainability has been launched.**

So it was revealed in detail in EXPO Ciruelas Secas 2025 (EXPO Prunes) by **Chileprunes executive director, Pedro Acuña** who opened the event with his presentation "The sustainable way in the prune industry".

This initiative is framed within the program Chile Origen Consciente and (Chile Conscientious Origin) developed by Chileprunes with the **Instituto Interamericano de Cooperación Agrícola, IICA**, (Interamerican Institute for Agricultural Cooperation) and the **Agencia de Sustentabilidad y Cambio Climático, ASCC**, (Agency for Sustainability and Climate Change) and **Odepa**.

The executive presented the advances of this project highlighting that the target is to differentiate the Chilean plum in the international markets through a seal that certifies that it was produced under sustainable quality standards. "We export to more than 80 markets and we must adapt to an increasingly demanding environment in terms of sustainability. This certification is a key tool to show our commitment and add value to our fruit", said the executive director of Chileprunes.

The path towards the certification started in 2021, in the middle of the pande-

mic, with the articulation of work teams and strategic alliances. Then in 2022 and 2023 progress was made with the creation of a sustainability standard validating key actors and establishing an **Acuerdo de Producción Limpia (Clean Production Agreement)**. In 2024 the structure of the project was consolidated and in 2025 the standard implementation started.

This has been a highly participative process, involving more than 600 actors of the industry including producers, processors and exporters. A governance was established with executive and technical committees to define a robust standard that addresses environmental, economic and social aspects.

This quality sustainability standard has two levels: Certification for processing plants, already available for interested companies, and Certification for Farms which will be available in the second half of 2025.

The program has digital tools, artificial intelligence and trainings to support the producers in the certification process. Chile Origen Consciente and (Chile Conscientious Origin) seeks, through this seal, to give international visibility to the Chilean prune as a sustainable and different product in the global markets.

For more information the companies can visit the web site [www.ciruelacertificada.cl](http://www.ciruelacertificada.cl) and start their certification process.

The invitation is extended to those who have not yet joined the initiative.

## AgriTech, from Summit Agro is boosting the upmost innovation in agriculture

**Summit Agro Chile is a multinational Japanese company specialized in agricultural sustainable inputs that has been in Chile for 10 years; it provides its customers the services of AgriTech, advanced technologies, that increase productivity and diminishes environmental impact.**



In line with its permanent commitment with the sustainable development of the agricultural sector, María Carolina Orellana, agronomist engineer, MS in charge of AgriTech Services in Summit Agro says: “the implementation of new technologies is key to increase productive efficiency in agriculture, especially with the scenario of climate change”.

Among the main products of the brand are the spraying drones that have the advantage of being easy to use and almost autonomous. “In China, I have seen them being used by 60 to 70-year-old farmers without any difficulty”, says Claudio Valdés, AgriTech and Seipro assistant manager.

There are around 80 thousand hectares of crops and fruit trees being overflown by DJI Chinese drones.



### Drones, supplements to traditional equipment

Intended as a supplement tool to traditional farming equipment, this DJI drones can be important in three big moments of the prune productive process: from protection against **winter diseases to the application of treatments during blooming**, sun blocking and drying, as long as the directions in the label of each product are obeyed.

First, during the winter, heavy rains flood the soil and make it difficult for traditional machinery to operate in the fields. This is a crucial time to apply preventive treatments for diseases in the wood. The spraying drones solve this problem because they operate from the air applying **bio fungicides** as Trichoderma on time protecting in this way the trees without the need to wait for the soil to dry.

Second, during the blooming season, specific applications are needed to prevent diseases that affect the setting and development of the fruit. Here, drones are key to apply **fungicides and bio stimulants** evenly without affecting the structure of the soil or compromising the quality of the crop. Moreover, its autonomous and programable capacity enables night applications to optimize the use of inputs.

Third, after the harvest the plums are put in sun drying fields. Drones not only make it easier to apply disinfectants to these fields, but also, due to the power of their propellers, they help turning the plums to allow them to **dry more evenly**. This function reduces manual labor, it speeds up the process and it minimizes the contamination risks.

“These devices not only improve productivity and reduce costs, but also allow precise applications in critical moments of the season. Spraying drones have proved to be an innovative, efficient and sustainable solution”, says Valdés.

Characteristics: these drones are 3 by 3-meters and have 16 propellers; they are NOT fumigation drones, but spraying drones. They can cover 50 to 60 hectares per day versus the 8 to 10 hectares conventional machines can cover and they reduce the use of water in 80 to 90%. To achieve this, they have batteries that last 10 minutes and can be recharged in another 10 minutes. They are 100% electric, they are autonomous and they use artificial intelligence.

In relation to safety and health, the operator is not in contact with the product applied unlike the tractor driver.

Drone technology has been in use in Chile since 2015 and it is estimated that today there are 800 to 1,000 drones operating in the country.





#### Other advanced technologies

Some of the services Summit Agro has available at the moment are the following:

The success of farming production depends a lot on the health of the soil and on having precise information about its composition. SoilScan is an innovative monitoring service that allows farmers to get a detailed diagnosis of the fertility of the soil through gamma ray sensor technology. This tool delivers high precision maps that identify nutrient deficiencies and other conditions that can affect the crop growth.

In this way, producers can make informed decisions about fertilizer and



amendment applications, thus optimizing resources and reducing unnecessary costs. SoilScan is not only a precise tool but it is also it is versatile adapting to various types of crops from fruit trees to extensive crops.

**Topscan**, Topography Services and aerial photogrammetry, plantable area designs: joining the work of topographers and the technology of aerial images, Topscan Services delivers topographic maps and highly detailed level curves; it delivers a 15 working day final report in several digital formats.

The joint use of SoilScan and Topscan allows to design the watering and drainage sectors efficiently and complementarily in the plantation to avoid several watering and fertilization problems, once the orchard is established, to reach the crop potentials.

**CanopyScan Drone**: canopy monitoring is an essential tool for the efficient management of crops and fruit trees. To do so, Summit Agro offers CanopyScan Drone; with drones equipped with high resolution cameras, it is possible to generate multispectral and thermal index mapping to define differences in strength, greenery and temperature within the same farm.

**Yieldscan**: this highly professional service predicts yield of crops, fruit trees and vineyards. The service allows the generation of a very precise predictive production model which can be used to calculate the yield in advance.

**Cropview**: it is an integrated platform that delivers weekly high-resolution satellite images. The platform integrates a field management notebook and it is linked to local weather stations allowing to track and work in a better way the numerous activities done in a farm.



## Chilean Industry Indicators year 2024

**Exported volume**  
88.897.082 kg



**Exported amount**  
255.119.752 US\$ FOB.



**Main markets;**



These 10 countries represent 79% of the volume of Chilean prunes within the 76 destinations to date.

Source: Chilean Customs.