

MAGAZINE

ASOCIACIÓN GREMIAL DE PROCESADORES Y EXPORTADORES DE CIRUELAS SECAS DE CHILE

First semester: shipments of Chilean prune exceed US\$ 100 million

During the first six months of 2025 the Chilean prune exports reached 34 metric tons (MT), equivalent to US\$ 100 million.

Exports of Prunes; January – June 2025			
N°	Country	Volume (Kg)	FOB in US\$
1	China	10.385.722	27.404.513
2	Mexico	2.947.977	8.692.813
3	Poland	2.753.346	7.427.758
4	Germany	2.715.075	8.724.758
5	USA	2.183.232	14.493.373
6	UK	1.424.792	3.570.820
7	Spain	1.384.355	6.396.026
8	Italy	1.274.763	4.416.538
9	Turkey	1.120.051	3.568.344
10	Australia	861.121	3.071.116
Source: Aduanas	Total Exports 69 countries	34.069.415	110.080.646

According to Customs Service, a service from the Chilean government, China is the main importer in terms of volume and amount of money. In fact, the Asian giant has received 10,385 metric tons of this fruit, equivalent to US\$ 27.4 million. After China, in terms of volume, there comes Mexico with almost 3 thousand tons, Poland with 2,753 tons, Germany with 2,753 and the United States with 2,183 metric tons. But, after China, the United States is the country that represents the highest return in dollars equivalent to US\$ 14.5 million.

Then, the top 10 list is made up with United Kingdom, Spain, Italy, Turkey and Australia among a total of 69 destinations to which the Chilean prune is sent including countries from the five continents.

Chile has been for many years the leading global exporter of prunes and big producers like the United States, France and Argentina have received this Chilean fruit; in the same way, exotic countries like Cyprus, Argelia, El Salvador, and the Netherland Antilles.

After Mexico, the main destinations in Latin America are Colombia, Peru and Brazil in this same order.



Winter in the plum orchard: normal progress in pruning and cold hours but there is still alert for water deficit

Rosario Larraín, regional agronomist at Prunesco makes a balance in the middle of the winter season

The winter advances in the European plum orchards with normal agronomical management and a satisfactory total of cold hours up to the moment. Nonetheless, the main concern is the low amount of accumulated rainfall during the season.

“We are in the middle of winter and the pruning is taking place in a normal way, regulating loads for a normal year. There is no overload nor extreme pruning. This is a sign that the producers are hoping for a season without any shocks”, says Rosario Larraín, regional agronomist at Prunesco.

Regarding whether conditions, the expert comments that “even though May was warm and this situation delayed the beginning of the winter recess, from mid-June the accumulation of cold hours started properly. Up to date, we have already about 550 hours in the Colchagua region and even more in some other places”. It is not the optimum, but it is a number that gives reassurance. Regarding the spring blossom, she adds, we will pay attention to the temperatures in September. The main concern is the rainfall. During 2024 there were more than 600 mm with an intense event on June. This year there have been only 270 mm in the



Colchagua area, in the VI Region, the most important for the prune. It is less than half of what we had last year and, so far, regarding July, we hope that the rain forecast for the last week of July becomes a reality.

“We are worried that there will not be enough water in dams and reservoirs, and not enough snow in the mountains to ensure watering at the end of the season”, she explains. Ideally, she says, at least 500 mm of well distributed rainfall are needed to keep good humidity in the soils and to face spring and summer in a good manner. “An isolated big event does not work if the soil is already saturated. It is better to have several smaller events”.

When asked about the effect that this irregular winter can have in the blooming, Larraín clarifies: “a good accumulation of cold hours and mild temperatures during blooming, between 16 and 25 C , can produce a more even opening of flowers

and so a better set. There are problems when the extreme temperatures affect the viability of the pollen”.

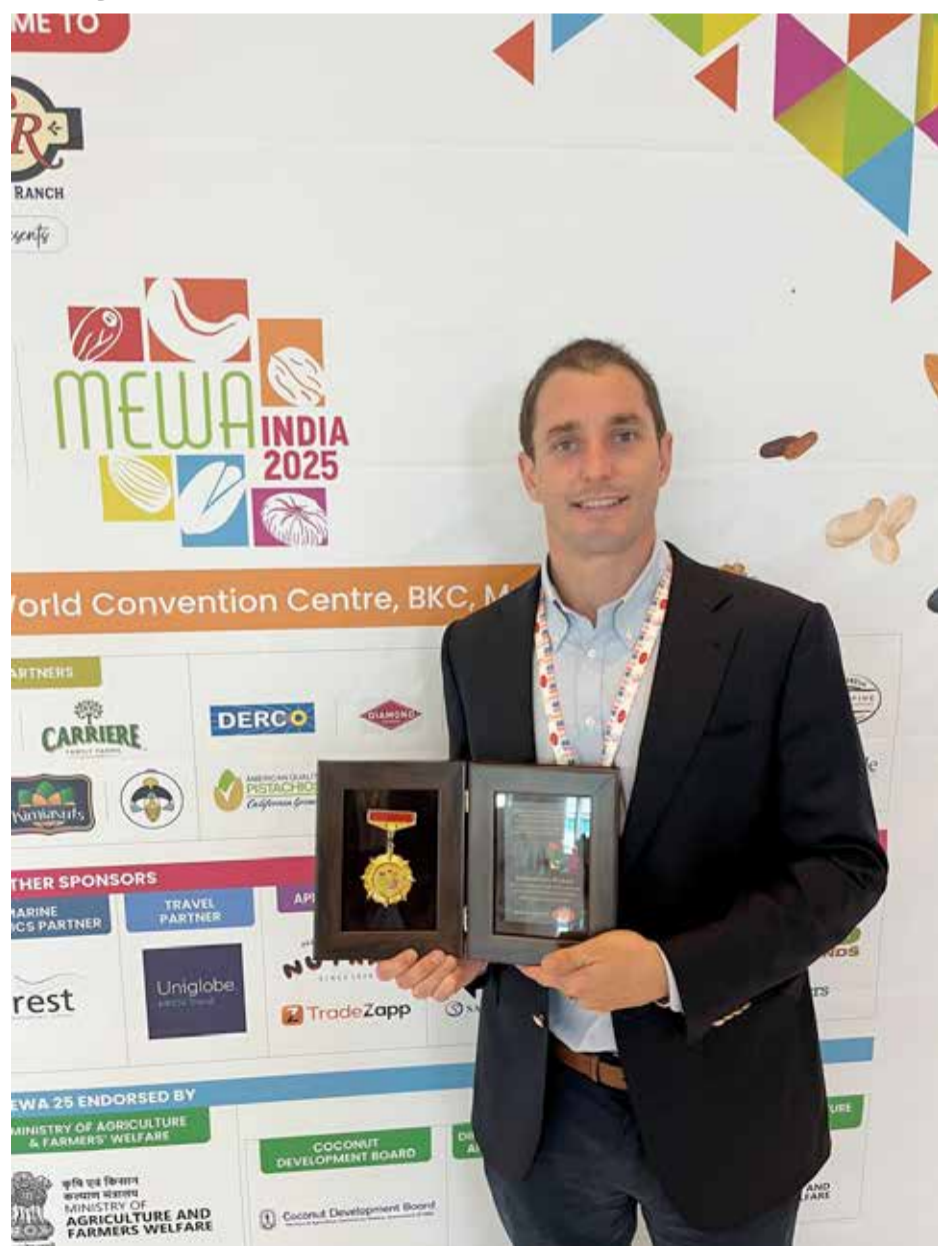
Regarding field work, both pruning and harvesting are more and more mechanized. Nowadays, harvesting is done with teams of about eight persons thanks so side by side machinery and more technified drying fields. In the same way, there have been added semi-mechanized pruners with pneumatic scissors that make the work easier and faster.

The use of cyanamide hydrogenated has also been increased to homogenize blooming and, in certain cases, it can advance the harvest of fruit to be consumed fresh. Even though this only represents a small percentage of the production, its impact in the national volume of dehydrated fruits is about 20%. Finally, regarding the structural challenge of labor, that is still a factor, some balance has been achieved due to labor rotation with workers from the cherry sector. “Labor is still scarce but improvements in mechanization have allowed to compensate this difficulty in some areas of the productive process”, adds Rosario Larraín.



INC ambassador looks at the international market

The international market of the prune is undergoing a dynamic moment marked by a strong demand that has kept the prices in the high range of its historical average. So says Sebastián Plaza, commercial manager of Frutexsa and ambassador of the International Nut and Dried Fruit Council (INC) of Chile who closely observes the main role China has in this matter.



“China continues to be a key actor. Its strong demand has kept good prices, which has been positive for the whole chain, from producers to exporters. Even though, this year, it is not expected an important percentage increase in relation to the record volume of 30,000 tons exported last year, the numbers are solid and very similar, explains the executive”.

According to him, the European markets, traditionally more demanding and with higher prices, have also had an important role this year. “Unlike 2024, The Europeans anticipated the purchases because last year they came after the Chinese and they had to buy at a price little bit higher than usual. This year has been the opposite: the Chinese came later willing to pay prices higher than usually which speaks of a competitive and consolidated industry. This year the sale speed is very good”.

At the same time, new actors like China and Uzbekistan are beginning to emerge as countries which produce prunes. “INC has started to include them in its statistics, acknowledging its growing importance in the global market. To ignore this phenomenon would be ignoring a reality that is transforming the industry regardless that their prune does not come from D’Agen plums which are the consumers favorite variety”, says Sebastián Plaza.

The ambassador’s role

The commercial manager of Frutexsa has been INC’s ambassador in Chile for two years. This capacity, which has to be applied for and must be approved by the board of the organization, implies the representation of Chile in this 85-country international network promoting good practices, quality standards, increase in the demand of dried fruits and a balance between production, exportation and sustainability.

“The job requires active participation in international meetings and congresses where we share figures, consumer tendencies and common concerns regarding the industry. From Chile we contribute specially with information regarding the prune industry, in which we are global leaders together with the United States”, he says.

The INC ambassador has a strategic role in the Ambassador’s Committee; he is the link between the organization and the different actors of the dried fruit sector national and internationally. Among his main responsibilities are the promotion of new members to INC, the establishment of relationships with key institutions, and reporting periodically about important information regarding exports among others.

To sum up, the ambassador acts as a technical-commercial reference of INC in its country, providing information, strategies and coordination for the global development of the dried fruit industry.

It is important to remember that for some months the Asociación Gremial de Procesadores y Exportadores de Ciruelas Secas de Chile, Chileprunes, is a member of INC, “which implies the commitment to promote the global industry of dried and dehydrated fruits, in our case focusing on prunes, towards a sustainable, innovative and prosperous future”, adds Pedro Acuña, executive director of Chileprunes.



A positive season is projected due to high quality fruit and market diversification

With a lot of optimism, Marcelo Lacunza, commercial manager at Prunesco, sees the current Chilean prune season in the international markets.



“The global demand has continued to be active, especially in Europe which compensates the slight slowdown of the Chinese market. In addition, the quality of the fruit has been excellent, better than last season with high levels of sugar thus making better the consumer’s experience”, he says.

Regarding the markets, the executive adds that Europe has taken a more leading role: “lots of European countries started the season without stock in their warehouses and this has been the main reason for the boost in the demand. Moreover, the United States has diminished its exportation level towards Europe, increasing its exports to Japan and Korea, opening in that way an opportunity for Chile”.

The issue of diversification is key, he says, and makes an example with the situation in Russia that “in the past, it was a very attractive market for Chile. Now with the war with Ukraine, the freights are not the same for Russia and everything became complicated. That is why it is good to diversify: “to put the eggs in different baskets” and not to depend so much on one market like the Russian or the Chinese”.

In relation to the Chinese buyers, during February, less buyers came but we have to wait until the end of the season to see how much they are going to buy and the importance they are going to have within the group of importing countries that, in the case of the Chilean prune, consists of more than 70 countries. “Despite this, the Chinese demand is high and, anyway, I think China will continue to be our number one market during the following three years”.

He also highlights the promotional work being done in India where Chileprunes has played an active role. “But there, we need to explain what the prune is and its numerous health benefits ...we have to create consumption and this, evidently, takes time, but, without doubt, has a promising future considering the size of the market”.

Chile is still the main prune producer and exporter in the world; its shipments are close to 90,000 tons per year.

In more than 50 countries.

For more than 16 years Prunesco has been the leader of a new market opening strategy, we are present in more that 50 countries. “Our goal has been always not to depend on one market. We were among the first ones to sell to China

and Japan and nowadays we are making campaigns in different countries, mainly visiting the retail”, adds Lacunza.

The focus of the business has been to build long term relationships: “campaigns do not bear fruits immediately. In China, for example, it took us several years to generate trust and knowledge regarding the Chilean product. Today, every customer acknowledges the quality of our prune and this is a door opener when there comes an opportunity”.

“As a company we make different campaigns in different countries, we visit the customers, we show the product and highlight its benefits. It is not only about selling but building lasting markets”, he says.

As Prunesco they are present in international shows and they are getting ready to be in Anuga 2025, in Cologne, Germany, from October the 4th to October the 8th.

Besides dehydrated fruit, Prunesco has developed a diversified offer including pulps, juices and retail products supplying international supermarkets with private labels.

Prunesco has been devoted to the processing and packaging of prunes; it has worked for more than 80 years in the dried fruit sector. It was established in 1941 by a group of producers looking for better conditions to export their products; the company has grown and has become the major prune exporter in the southern hemisphere according to its web page.



Drones come to make an important contribution to the Chilean agriculture

During winter, heavy rains can flood the soil and make it difficult for traditional machinery to enter the orchards. This in the middle of a crucial time to apply preventive treatments against diseases related to the wood of the plum trees.



Spraying drones are an important solution for this problem.

Sumit Agro Chile, a Japanese multinational company specialized in sustainable agricultural inputs, that has been in Chile for ten years, launched globally on Tuesday, March the 15th through AgriTech services, two new drone models: Agras DJI T100 and Agras DJI T70P.

Claudio Valdés, assistant manager of AgriTech and Seipro says that “these models can achieve important changes in the Chilean agriculture. DJI T100 is a greater scope drone with a 100-liter tank (a previous model only had a 40-liter tank) which allows more autonomy. It has a triple function; besides spraying, it can apply solids like seeds and fertilizers up to 150 kilos and to carry loads from A to B in an orchard, fruit or inputs for example, up to 100 kilos”.

Agras T70P, he adds, also has triple function but it has a smaller tank, 70 liters,



and it can spread solids and it can lift loads up to 70 kilos. This is a revolutionary technology for the Chilean Agriculture, says the expert from AgriTech because it is a unique advanced technology, with triple function that improves productivity and diminishes environmental impact. Nearly 80 thousand hectares of fruit and crop orchards are being flown by DJI Chinese drones. Agras DJI T100 and Agras DJI T70P are models that are a continuation of the drones offered previously by the brand but before they only had the spraying function. The launching in Chile was a double one: the first one, on July the 22nd took place in Club de Golf Los Lirios in Rancagua, and the second one was on July the 29th in The Country Club of Temuco. The total sales projections are more or less 500 units per year for both models combined.

Going along with the prune in different stages.

This DJI drones can be important in three different stages of the productive process of the prunes: from protection against diseases during winter, applying treatments during blooming, sun blocker applications and drying during other seasons. First, these drones, since they operate from the air, solve the problem of applying bio fungicides and protecting thus the trees without the need to wait for dryer soils. Second, during blooming, it is necessary to apply preventive substances to avoid diseases that affect the set and development of the fruit. Here, drones are key again for the application of fungicides and bio-stimulants in a uniform way without affecting the structure of the soil and without compromising the quality of the crop. Even more, its autonomous and programmable capacity allows night time applications optimizing the inputs. Third, once harvested, the plums are put in sun drying fields. Drones not only make it easier to apply disinfectants in these fields but, thanks to the power of their propellers, they help turn the plums so they can dry in a uniform way. This capacity reduces hand labor, speeds the process and minimizes contamina-

tion risks. “These devices not only improve productivity and reduce costs, but also allow precise applications in critical moments during the process. Drones have proved to be an innovative, efficient and sustainable solution”, says Valdés. Drone technology in agriculture has been used in Chile since 2015 and it is estimated that today there are from 800 to 1,000 drones operating in the country.



Chilean Industry Indicators, First Half of 2025

