

MAGAZINE

ASOCIACIÓN GREMIAL DE PROCESADORES Y EXPORTADORES DE CIRUELAS SECAS DE CHILE

13th Prunes Expo 2026: Chilean Prune Industry Reaffirms Global Leadership and Projects Global Growth

With broad participation from government officials, producers, exporters, and key industry stakeholders, the 13th edition of the Prunes Expo 2026—the industry’s leading national event—was held; it was organized by Chileprunes.



At the event’s opening ceremony, **Chileprunes President Pedro Pablo Díaz** highlighted the unique and strategic nature of this industry for the country. With production nearing 100,000 tons and present in more than 80 markets, Chile ranks as the world’s leading producer and exporter of prunes, a reflection of sustained efforts across the entire value chain.

“This is a small yet significant industry that has brought enormous benefits to Chile and the world. Our agricultural production, harvesting methods, drying techniques, processing, and marketing are unique, delivering to the end consumer a product whose quality is comparable only to that of the most complex industries. Given the high degree of specialization, this is a business for experts only.”

However, we cannot settle for a size 75 for our plums. Although it may be inconvenient, adds the president of Chileprunes, we must focus on producing larger, sweeter plums for European markets, which are demanding quality and not just “natural condition.”

For his part, **Undersecretary of Agriculture Francesco Venezian** highlighted the industry’s strategic role within the national agricultural and forestry sector, noting its dynamism, export capacity, and public-private coordination.

“The plum industry is an example of the potential of the Chilean agricultural sector. With more than 600 producers, a presence on over 13,000 hectares, and exports exceeding \$300 million, it has firmly established itself in international markets,” he said.

Meanwhile, **ProChile’s Executive Director, Ignacio Fernández**, highlighted the Chilean industry’s success in international markets and the collaboration between the public and private sectors. “Chile is now the world’s leading exporter of prunes, which is an extraordinary achievement. This leadership is the result of collaborative efforts and a consistent internationalization strategy.”

Antonio Walker, president of the National Agricultural Society (SNA), highlighted the growing importance of dried fruit within Chile’s export sector. “Fruit growing is Chile’s second-largest export sector after copper, and within it, dried fruit—especially the D’Agen plum—has been gaining an increasingly significant foothold thanks to the expansion of its planted area. They have demonstrated a great capacity to conquer international markets, especially due to the work they do on sustainability in their orchards,” he noted.

In this regard, **Pedro Acuña, director of Chileprunes**, noted that “sustainability in our industry is not just about the environment: it is a comprehensive approach that encompasses production, social, and economic aspects, and aims to ensure the sector’s long-term viability.” He added that “we are charting a clear path, with

standards, audits, and certification, that will allow us to have a visible seal by 2027, backed by the Chilean government.”

Global production and China’s influence

José Antonio Soffia, commercial manager at Superfruit, noted that global production has averaged around 210,000 metric tons (MT) over the past 15 years, with an expected decrease of about 10,000 MT in 2026 (falling from 204,000 MT in 2024/25 to a projected 191,250 MT in 2025/2026

“The global supply of prunes is highly concentrated: four countries account for nearly 95% of global production, meaning that any change has a significant impact on the market; and if we look only at Chile and the U.S., that figure is 70%.”

He also mentioned the Chinese market. “That country’s growth as a market has been extraordinary, rising from importing about 5,000 metric tons in 2010 to around 40,000 last year. It is a key market and a strategic challenge for the industry. Chinese consumers associate plums and prunes with health benefits, which has driven demand and opens up opportunities for market positioning.”

For his part, **Cristián Benavente, commercial manager at Exportadora Ran-cagua**, also mentioned China, but in the context of the plum market; 96.2% of this Chilean fruit is exported to China.

Why do Chinese consumers eat so many Chilean D’Agen plums and prunes? Because unprocessed foods are strongly associated with good health (digestion, among other benefits); second, that country is known for seeking high sugar content, and our fruit is sweeter than usual (for example, compared to the Uzbek product); third, there is an air freight market that understands the Chinese demand well and steps in when local supply is limited.

Juan Pablo Sotomayor, Production Manager at Frutexsa, conducted an analysis and production forecast for plums: while official figures indicate 13,500 hectares of D’Agen plum trees, I believe we are closer to 14,500 hectares (based on conversations with producers and nurseries, and given that the data is released every two years). But the most interesting part: he projects 16,500 hectares by 2030.

“Today, the industry in Chile is producing around 115,000–117,000 tons, and with current plantations, we could project reaching 130,000 tons in the coming years. However, this growth must be managed carefully: every additional 1,000 hectares means about 10,000 more tons that the market must absorb. Therefore, rather than growing rapidly, the challenge is to manage expansion, ensure quality, and sustain prices in an international landscape where other countries are also adjusting their supply.”

He added that “it is key not to overplant and to focus on quality: if we want to sustain good prices, we must take care of the fruit and professionalize every stage of the process. The recent good prices have sparked great interest, but we cannot forget that the business is cyclical: all it takes is for global supply to increase for conditions to change rapidly.”

Focusing on Millennials and Generation Z

Sebastián Valdés, business executive, discussed the consumption of dried plums, citing three key markets for Chile: Mexico, Germany, and Poland. Undoubtedly, each country has its own unique characteristics. In Mexico and Poland, consumption is closely linked to price and GDP. In Germany, these factors have less influence, and among those over 65, practically none at all. However, a common trend across all three countries is the impact that Millennials (born between 1981 and 1996) and Generation Z (born between 1997 and 2012) have on prune consumption—but in the opposite direction: as these new generations enter the market, average per capita consumption decreases.

Although they make up 25% of the total population, they account for 40% of wellness spending. Younger consumers are conceptualizing wellness differently, says Valdés. “Young people are looking for ‘functional nutrition.’ They scrutinize labels closely. They want food to act as a supplement. They don’t want a

pill, but they want the food to replace what the pill does, as if it were a supplement. In this world, how does the prune compete? How do we get the prune into the daily diet of Millennials and Generation Z in a market “addicted” to good nutrition? How do we transform it into a wellness capsule? That is the challenge.

For his part, **Joe Turkovich, a California prune producer, former president of the CA Prune Board, and chair of the nutritional research committee**, notes that the future of prunes lies in defining the path to take: that of “value” or that of “commodity.” Chile, he says, already leads in volume, but its next phase must be to make the leap toward leadership in value, where R&D, market research, and collaboration with other countries all play a significant role.

“Global demand requires consistency in both the product and the message, long-term investments, and credibility. We must know how to reach consumers in different ways, understanding the culture behind each one. And a question here is whether there will be collaboration or competition. Undoubtedly, we will always be competing, but we can collaborate to achieve a coherent message that reaches the (global) consumer, and the work through the International Prune Association (IPA) is proof that we can indeed collaborate. Collaboration is very valuable for everyone.”

Matías Guzmán, Founding Partner and COO of Neutral Farming, spoke about the integration of AI into agricultural operations, noting that it offers three major benefits: it provides an immediate, real-time response; it enables quick and easy certification; and it achieves a reduction of up to 30% in various inputs. For example, it irrigates and fertilizes with precision thanks to smart diagnostics that provide actionable recommendations for fertilization and irrigation.

The Prune Expo has established itself as a vital platform for the entire production chain, facilitating the exchange of knowledge, the identification of trends, the creation of collaborative networks, and the shaping of the sector’s future. The event brought together producers, processors, exporters, importers, authorities, and national and international experts. With a focus on innovation, sustainability, and international expansion, the sector plans to continue strengthening its global presence and contributing to the country’s economic and agricultural development.

Chilean Plums in China: Competing on Quality and Consistency

At the 13th Prunes Expo 2026, **Cristián Benavente, commercial manager of Exportadora Rancagua**, provided a strategic overview of the present and future of the plum business, with a focus on the Chinese market, the primary export destination for this product.



In fact, 96.2% of this Chilean fruit goes to China. This amounts to 47,540 metric tons (MT), equivalent to approximately US\$100 million in 2025, with lower volumes but significantly better prices than in 2024. For the 2026 season, shipments of 49,387 MT are expected.

Taiwan accounts for a much smaller share; it has fewer restrictions than China regarding fresh produce, which has boosted sales there. Growth is also evident in the U.S., largely driven by the Asian population in that country, while the remaining markets account for very low volumes.

Seventy-two percent of exports come from VI Region.

Benavente noted that the opening and consolidation of this market has presented a significant opportunity for the sector, but has also substantially raised the bar in terms of quality, fruit condition, and consistency in shipments. In this context, he emphasized that the challenge is no longer just reaching China, but maintaining a differentiated and reliable value proposition over time.

In line with the above, he emphasized that the competitiveness of the business is each day more linked to the ability to meet strict standards. The condition of the fruit upon arrival, its firmness, size, and the consumer’s final experience are key factors in maintaining and expanding demand. Added to this is the Chinese market’s growing sensitivity to issues of safety and traceability, which requires rigorous control throughout the entire production chain.

On another point, Benavente noted that the plum business faces a challenging scenario, where margins are under pressure from logistical, production, and commercial factors. And also from Chinese production itself: in the northern provinces, near Mongolia, it is estimated that there are 60,000 hectares planted (unofficial figures). “For plums, that is 464,000 tons—100 times what Chile exports to them—which in a way speaks to the market’s potential. A good question is how much of this is dried; based on informal conversations, it would be around 20%, though these figures would need to be verified,” Benavente notes. He also emphasized the importance of having a deep understanding of Chinese consumers. Why do they like Chilean D’Agen plums so much? Because unprocessed foods are strongly associated with good health (digestion, among other benefits); second, that country is known for seeking high sugar content, and our plums are sweeter than usual (for example, compared to the Uzbek product); and third, there is an air freight market that clearly understands Chinese demand and steps in when local supply is limited (5% of shipments are by air, equivalent to 2,300 metric tons).

As for sales formats, Chile exports almost its entire volume for repackaging at the destination, and the units that reach the end consumer are almost all 200, 300, or 500 grams. In that repackaging process, we have losses of around 30%, the executive notes.

It is not just about exporting fruit, but about understanding preferences, consumption habits, and key moments of demand. The ability to anticipate these variables and adapt the supply is, as he pointed out, an increasingly important competitive advantage.

Finally, he noted that while there are clear opportunities for growth, the future of the plum business will depend on the sector’s ability to further professionalize its operations, raise standards, and adapt to a highly competitive environment. Chile has favorable conditions and export experience, but leadership is not guaranteed.

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Unprecedented Drop in Exports to China and the Opportunities Presented by the U.S. and Europe

For many years, China had never relinquished its top spot—whether monthly or annually—as the primary destination for Chilean prunes. Now, that day came, and today, it ranks second in volume (metric tons) and revenue (FOB dollars)—after Poland—with figures hovering around 978,000 kilograms and US\$3.2 million.

Exports of Prunes; January – February 2026			
N°	Country	Volume (Kg)	FOB in US\$
1	Poland	1.790.991	6.078.520
2	China	978.241	3.211.178
3	México	835.069	2.879.576
4	UK	727.265	2.330.428
5	Germany	578.737	2.304.075
6	Spain	432.774	2.292.800
7	USA	477.075	2.236.035
8	Italy	417.232	1.770.514
9	Turkey	474.915	1.704.731
10	Australia	355.981	1.428.423
Source: Aduanas	Total Exports 50 countries	9.312.483	34.532.083

The decline has been drastic, representing only 37.5% of the volume recorded during the same period last year, when exports reached 2,607 metric tons (and US\$5.98 million).

In terms of destinations, Europe strongly leads the shipments. Poland stands as the main market, with purchases of 1,791 metric tons, equivalent to US\$6.07 million, consolidating its position as a key strategic partner for Chilean prunes.

The United States and Spain also report positive news:

At the strategic level, the United States increased its volume by 32%, and its unit price rose from \$4.43/kg to an average of \$4.69/kg for the period, although in February alone it had already reached \$4.88/kg.

In Spain, although export volume fell slightly, FOB value increased. The February snapshot shows that the price jumped from \$4.80 to \$5.91/kg (+23%), establishing itself as the market with the best return per kilogram, which suggests positioning higher-value-added or premium products in this market.

According to figures from Chilean Customs, exports in the first few months of the year totaled 9,312 metric tons, equivalent to US\$34.5 million FOB, reflecting a strong start to the season for the industry.

Mexico remains a key market, with exports exceeding 835,000 kilograms and reaching nearly US\$2.9 million, leading the way in Latin America.

The United Kingdom and Germany, both with shipments exceeding 570,000 kilograms and values close to US\$2.3 million, reflect the strength of the European market.

The United States, with over 477,000 kilograms, US\$2.2 million, remains a key destination in North America.

Other notable markets include Spain, Italy, Turkey, and Australia, reflecting the diversification of destinations and the stability of international demand.

In Latin America, in addition to Mexico, markets such as Brazil, Colombia, and Peru stand out (based on historical trends), and continue showing sustained growth in consumption of this product.

These figures indicate a lower concentration in a single market compared to previous years and reflect an increasingly diversified export strategy on the part of the industry.

Chile is the world's leading producer and exporter of prunes, bringing this superfood to consumers on different continents and reinforcing its reputation for quality, availability, and nutritional value.

The information is based on official data from the Chilean National Customs Service.

Some key figures from the 13th Prunes Expo 2026

Following this successful event, numerous key figures were shared by a wide range of speakers during their presentations on Wednesday, March 18.

Here we share some of them, along with the comments that provide context:

- “With production nearing 100,000 tons and a presence in more than 80 markets, Chile is positioned as the world’s leading producer and exporter of prunes, reflecting sustained efforts throughout the value chain.” (**Pedro Pablo Díaz, president of Chileprunes**)
- “The prune industry is an example of the potential of the Chilean agricultural sector. With more than 600 producers, a presence spanning over 13,000 hectares, and exports exceeding US\$300 million, it has firmly established itself in international markets.” (**Francesco Venezian, Undersecretary of Agriculture**)
- “Global production over the past 15 years has averaged around 210,000 metric tons (MT), with an expected decrease of about 10,000 MT in 2026 (falling from 204,000 MT in 2024/25 to a projected 191,250 MT in 2025/26).” (**José Antonio Soffia, Commercial Manager at Superfruit**)
- “The global supply of prunes is highly concentrated: four countries account for nearly 95% of the global production, meaning that any change has a significant impact on the market; and if we look only at Chile and the U.S., that figure is 70%.” (**José Antonio Soffia**)
- “Over the last five years, the trend in Chile’s exports of fresh D’agen plums is as follows: 57,200 MT in 2022, 55,000 MT in 2023, then a rise to 72,500 MT in 2024, followed by 47,500 MT in 2025. The projection for this year is 49,400 metric tons.” (**Cristián Benavente, commercial manager at Exportadora Rancagua**)
- “While official figures put the area planted with D’Agen plum trees at 13,500 hectares, I believe we’re actually around 14,500 hectares (based on conversations with growers and nurseries and given that the data is released every two years). And we project 16,500 hectares by 2030.” (**Juan Pablo Sotomayor, Production Manager at Frutexsa**)
- “Today, the industry in Chile is producing around 115,000–117,000 tons, and with current plantings, we could project reaching 130,000 tons in the coming years. However, this growth must be managed carefully: every additional 1,000 hectares means about 10,000 more tons that the market must absorb.” (**Juan Pablo Sotomayor**)
- “If I look at the last 5 years and use the average price for size 70, I get an average price of US\$2.20. So, a quick calculation tells me that the business is yielding US\$10,000 per hectare.” (**Juan Pablo Sotomayor**)
- “Over the past 4 years, 20,000 hectares of vineyards have been uprooted in the Colchagua Valley, a valley that is very good for plums. So, what does the producer who clears the vineyard plant?” (**Juan Pablo Sotomayor**)



Let's Talk About 'Well-being' to Connect with Millennials and Generation Z

As part of the 2026 Prunes EXPO, Sebastián Valdés, a corporate executive, presented an in-depth analysis of the trends shaping global food consumption, placing special emphasis on a factor that is emerging as decisive: generational change.



Using a robust econometric model, the economist demonstrated how consumption has evolved in various markets over the past few decades and projected its behavior over the next five years.

Beyond traditional variables such as GDP or prices, one factor stands out clearly: the impact of the younger generations, particularly Millennials (born between 1981 and 1996) and Generation Z (born between 1997 and 2012). According to the analysis presented, this variable explains best the changes in consumption across the three markets studied: Poland, Germany and Mexico—key destinations for Chilean prune exports.

Millennials and Generation Z not only represent nearly

25% of the population but also account for about 40% of spending on wellness. These are radically different consumers who view food as part of a holistic approach to health and quality of life.

For this segment, wellness is not an occasional occurrence, but a daily practice that guides every purchasing decision. They seek out products backed by science, analyze nutritional information in detail, and prioritize quality over price, Valdés remarks. "At the same time, they are heavily influenced by the digital environment, combining expert sources with content from social media."

This new profile poses significant challenges: these are "maximizing" consumers who constantly evaluate whether a food truly adds value to their health. In this context, concepts such as functional nutrition, gut health, weight management, and mental well-being take on a central role.

The Challenge Ahead

One of the most significant findings from the presentation is that, as these generations gain greater influence in the market, consumption of certain traditional products tends to decline if those products fail to adapt to their new expectations.

This raises a strategic question for the industry: How can products like prunes be integrated into these consumers' daily diets? How can they be positioned not just as food, but as genuine wellness solutions?

Valdés argues that the key lies in deeply understanding this generation and communicating the product's value in their own terms. This involves moving toward a clearer message focused on its functional benefits, nutritional value, and role in a healthy lifestyle.

The analysis concludes with a strategic observation: change is already underway. Markets are evolving, and Millennials and Generation Z are defining the new rules of the game. In this context, the industry faces the challenge—and the opportunity—to adapt in time

International experiences show that the path forward involves investing in positioning, brand development, and effective communication with these new segments. Rather than competing solely on volume, the focus must be on capturing value in an increasingly sophisticated market.

Strengthening Relationships and Business at International Trade Shows

Chileprunes and several of its members attended key international trade shows for dried plums: MEWA India 2026, held from January 23 to January 25, and Gulfood Dubai, from January 26 to January 30.

It is precisely at these key events that the Chilean prune industry establishes commercial ties and builds trust with major international importers (retailers, distributors, among others), creates networks, discusses trends, markets, prices, and formats -among other things- and finalizes the season's last purchases.

Pedro Acuña, executive director of Chileprunes, notes that Chile's participation in these trade shows "is of tremendous importance, given that there are buyers and visitors from all over the world. We take the opportunity to hold several meetings with clients and prospects, finalize purchase agreements, and visit trade shows and supermarkets to observe trends and see what the competition is up to. We carry out many of these activities in collaboration with our members, which allows for a rich exchange of opinions, experiences, and knowledge."

Both events were attended by Pablo Morandé, José Antonio Soffia, and Martín Correa, all from Superfruit; Vicente Cepeda from Prunesco; Sebastián Aguilera and Joaquín Tagle from South 365; and Juan Coloma from Kaikén, accompanied by Chileprunes. Meanwhile, the Dubai event was attended by Sebastián Plaza of Frutexsa; Marcelo Lacunza of Prunesco; Grace Díaz and Bruno Ceroni, both from Goodvalley; Pedro Monti of Silvestres; José Ignacio Lanza of Baika; Cristián Infante and Domingo Calvo of Pacific Nut, among others.

MEWA is a must-attend event for exporters and importers, retailers, processors, chefs, packaging experts, and healthy food brands. With over 10,000 visitors and 300 exhibitors from 50 countries, the event brings together business, innovation, and networking. For this reason, Chile—the world's leading producer and exporter of prunes—had a booth at the fair.

Gulfood, on the other hand, is the largest trade fair for food and beverage business, sourcing, and innovation in the Middle East and Africa. Held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, it hosts over 5,500 exhibitors from more than 130 countries. In recent years, Chile has played a leading role, showcasing its products based on healthy, safe, and sustainable food, including prunes, walnuts, almonds, hazelnuts, raisins, and oats, among others.



Major suppliers to the agricultural and prune industries

Summit Agro, Southern Solutions and Abastible provide key solutions for the sector.



In Chile, we have major suppliers that make easier the work in orchards, both for agriculture in general and for the prune industry in particular. Summit Agro, Southern Solutions, and Abastible are three key players in the sector, positioning themselves as leaders in their respective categories:

Increasingly Advanced Drones for the Agricultural Sector

Summit Agro **Chile**, a Japanese multinational company specializing in sustainable agricultural inputs—with a presence in Chile since 2014 and over 40 years of global experience—provides its customers with a wide range of solutions, including crop protection products, bio stimulants, and technological services to support agriculture.

Rodrigo Carvalho, national assistant manager of Marketing and Innovation at Summit Agro Chile, notes that among the brand's main products are spraying drones, which have the advantage of being highly autonomous. More than 150,000 hectares of crops and fruit trees in Chile are being flown over by DJI drones, which are made in China.

Ashlock: Receiving Excellent After-Sales Service

With nearly 200 machines in operation in Chile and a presence in approximately 50 companies in the industry, Ashlock—represented in the country by Southern Solutions—has established a business model in which after-sales service is not merely an add-on, but the core of its value proposition.

This is how Jorge Searle, commercial manager at Southern Solutions, explains it, highlighting that one of the company's main strengths lies in its ability to provide ongoing support to its customers, ensuring the operational continuity of their equipment throughout the entire season.

Abastible: Optimizing the Dehydration and Tenderizing of Prunes

For many years, Abastible has added value through the development and implementation of energy solutions that enable an optimal drying and tenderizing process for prunes, while improving energy efficiency, enhancing the quality of the final product, and minimizing waste.

This is how the company fulfills its goal of being a consistent strategic partner and, through a systematic approach, succeeds in optimizing and streamlining the sector's production processes.

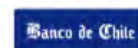
Sponsors Expo Prunes 2026



Auspiciadores Oro



Auspiciadores Plata



Indicators of Chilean industry first 2 months 2026

Exported volume

9.312.483 kg



Exported amount

34.532.083 US\$ FOB.



Main markets



These 10 countries represent 75.9% of the volume within the 50 destinations of Chilean prunes to date.

Source: Chilean Customs.