

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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Required Report - public distribution

Date: 5/24/2018

GAIN Report Number:

Argentina

Fresh Deciduous Fruit Semi-annual

Apples and Pears

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Report Highlights:

For CY 2018, production of the two types of fresh deciduous fruit is forecast to decrease to 530,000 MT for apples and 530,000 MT for pears from official USDA estimates. Exports are expected to increase but will remain below normal levels due to lack of competitiveness of local exporters in international markets, and domestic consumption will go down following the production decrease.

Executive Summary:

Unfavorable weather conditions and market signals lower expectations for apple and pear production in 2018 to 530,000 MT each. Apple and pear exports, although projected to rise to 90,000 MT and 290,000 MT, respectively, will fail to reach normal levels as strong, regional competitors capture share from Argentina in international markets. Domestic consumption will decrease to 260,000 MT for apples and 90,000 MT for pears due to lower production.

Production:

Currently, the industry consists of approximately 2,400 producers, 220 packing houses, 260 cold-storage facilities and 60,000 direct-hire employees, a sharp contrast to the approximately 9,000 fruit producers of fifteen years ago. Apple and pear production is concentrated in Patagonia's Upper Valley of the provinces of Rio Negro (80 percent) and Neuquen (15 percent). The remaining 5 percent is located in the Valle de Uco in Mendoza province.

The main apple varieties are Red Delicious (64 percent), Granny Smith (14 percent), Gala (13 percent), Cripps Pink/Pink Lady (6 percent) and others (3 percent). The main pear varieties are Packham's Triumph (41 percent), D'Anjou (24 percent), Williams (16 percent), Abate Fetel (6 percent), Bosc (5 percent), and others (8 percent). Source: *Top Info Marketing S.A.*

Planted Area

Planted: For CY 2018 and CY 2017, planted area for apples and pears remains unchanged at 20,000 hectares and 26,500 hectares, respectively, compared to official estimates. Overall though, planted area has been experiencing a downward trend, especially for apples, as economic issues influence agricultural land occupation patterns. In the past three years, 40 percent of orchards have been abandoned or removed from production. For example, apple orchards in Mendoza province are being transformed into more profitable operations, such as vineyards. In other cases, urban development is driving land use from agricultural to commercial and residential uses.

Argentina's fruit producers have been battling a host of production issues in the past several years that have lowered returns and negatively affected the long-term viability of the industry. Many external factors, such as unfavorable weather conditions, falling currency values and domestic tax policies have impacted producer returns. In addition, rising input costs, such as labor and energy expenses, have reduced available capital needed for reinvestment in orchard health and efficiency gains to increase productivity. In CY 2017, estimates range between 30-40 percent of orchards were not pruned, especially for apples (estimated costs of pruning is \$750 per hectare).

The production costs for a kilogram of apples or pears is between USD0.30-0.35 and consists of 60 percent labor (40 percent packing and 20 percent production) and 40 percent capital, inputs, and service costs (i.e., energy, fertilizer, transportation, packaging, customs fees, phytosanitary and quality certifications, etc.) The producer receives about USD0.25/kg while the retail price for a kilogram of fruit is about USD2.5.

Harvested Area

Harvested area for both apples and pears has been decreasing under the financial strain of several years of low returns. For CY 2018, harvested area for both fruits is estimated to remain unchanged from the previous year. For CY 2017, harvested area for apples is decreased to 13,000 hectares and harvested area for pears is lowered to 20,000 hectares from USDA estimates.

For calendar year (CY) 2018, production of fresh deciduous fruit (apples and pears) is forecast to decrease from 550,000 MT to 530,000 MT for apples, and from 600,000 MT to 530,000 MT for pears. CY2018 is expected to be a “lighter” season for apples as the trees lifecycle recovers from a heavy blossom season in CY2017. In addition, economic struggles have reduced planted area and prevented producers from keeping orchards in good condition along with hail during the production season, have reduced production potential for both fruits.

For CY 2017, Post’s estimate for apple and pear production was increased to 560,000 MT and 540,000 MT, respectively, from official estimates, as the damage produced by hail storms and late frosts was not as severe as initially expected. However, production of both types of fruit was below historic levels due to a decrease in planted area and weather-related damage.

Factors Affecting the Fruit Sector

For over a decade, apple and pear producers have seen profits dwindle and their financial sustainability erode due to higher operating costs and poor economic conditions. Smaller operations have been considerably weakened by this trend, and, as they exit the industry, greater sector consolidation has taken place. The larger, integrated operations are surviving tough conditions through greater cost sharing and marketing outreach. Nevertheless, the whole sector remains compromised in its ability to attract investment and to compete in international markets with stronger Southern Hemisphere competitors, such as Chile and South Africa.

In response, the Macri government in December 2015 began implementing economic measures, such as a five percent export tax elimination, devaluation of the Argentine peso, and a seven percent export rebate for fruit shipped from Patagonian ports (no longer in effect), to support the industry. Although of benefit to the industry, high inflation rates and rising costs have undercut much of the value of these government measures.

Industry sources report that, for the apple and pear sectors to regain its financial viability and profitability in the next few years, the following challenges must be addressed:

- a. Engage in structural change: Secure investment in mechanization to improve yields, and the development of new varieties, primarily apple varieties.
- a. Expand vertical integration: Only efficient players will survive the crisis, i.e. vertically integrated companies which produce high-quality fruit for demanding markets that pay higher prices. Those companies that are environmentally sustainable and make the best use of water, land and other natural resources will be in a better position to succeed.

- a. Secure financial assistance from the national government to invest in technological improvements.
- a. Regain competitiveness in export markets, becoming more efficient, increasing production (less area with higher yields), and obtain higher volumes of fruit for packing purposes per hectare.
- a. Improve public infrastructure, such as roads, communications, energy, social housing, among others.

Consumption:

Domestic consumption in CY 2018 is forecast to decrease to 260,000 MT for apples and 90,000 MT for pears as smaller production and larger exports reduce the available supply. CY 2017 domestic apple consumption of 260,000 MT remains unchanged from official estimates, while pear consumption is increased by 5 percent, to 100,000 MT, due to larger production.

Distribution Channels

Apple and pear fruit distribution tends to fall into three categories:

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- (1) Hyper and supermarkets: Large-scale sellers usually sell to these outlets by volume rather than quality.
- (2) Niche markets: Sellers with branded products that are recognized in the domestic and export market and maintain a higher price point.
- (3) pre-established points of sale: Small companies handle small volumes that are distributed to pre-established points of sale in larger cities that serve a high per capita fruit consumption rate.

Organics

As reported by Argentina's National Service of Agricultural and Food Health and Quality (SENASA), the Upper Valley has over 42,000 organic-certified hectares planted primarily to apples and pears. *Private sources estimate that about 10 percent of the total production of fresh apples and pears in the Upper Valley is certified organic.* In CY 2017, Rio Negro province expanded its organic-certified fruit area by 64 percent over last year, with between 2,000-3,000 hectares dedicated to apples and pears.

Higher organic production costs are primarily due to the manual pruning of fruit, biological weed control, and certification fees. More successful organic apple producers are those growing varieties such as Cripps Pink (Pink Lady), Granny Smith, and Gala. An increasing volume of organic fruit is utilized by the manufacturing for organic juices and specialty food products, such as cereal bars.

Private sources estimate that about 15 percent of the total production of fresh apples and pears in the Upper Valley is exported. The main destination for Argentine organic apples and pears is the European Union (EU). For organic pears, all varieties are exported. In CY 2017, 19,000 MT of organic apples were exported, an increase of 8 percent of CY 2016. Organic pear exports in CY 2017 fell 9 percent over last

year to 24,000 MT. Organic exports are forecast to rise in the next few years on the expectation of a continuing price premium of 40 -50 percent over conventional prices.

Domestic Consumption: Domestic consumption of organic apples and pears is negligible. Official sources estimate that, in CY 2017, only 180 MT of organic apples and 1 MT of organic pears were consumed in Argentina.

Trade:

Exports

Argentina exports apples and pears to about 60 markets. In CY 2017, the EU replaced Brazil as the most significant fruit export market for apples (by volume), followed by Paraguay and Brazil.

Moreover, Brazil remained the top market for Argentine pears, followed by Russia and the EU.

For CY 2018, fresh apple and pear exports are projected to increase slightly: for apples from 80,000 MT to 90,000 MT and for pears from 280,000 MT to 290,000 MT due to a lower fruit supply in the Northern Hemisphere. Nevertheless, exports for both fruits are forecast below historical levels as Argentina's falling competitiveness provides market opportunities for strong Southern Hemisphere competitors, such as Chile, New Zealand and South Africa, in its traditional export markets.

For CY 2017 exports are revised upward from 76,000 MT to 78,000 MT for apples, and from 270,000 MT to 280,000 MT for pears, compared to official estimates, as the fruit supply was larger than initially expected. However, diminished competitiveness in export markets continued to negatively affect exports. Besides lack of competitiveness, exports for both fruit types remained below normal levels as a result of economic difficulties in major export markets, such as Russia

Fresh Apple Exports – Main Destinations						
Partner Country	2015		2016		2017	
	USD	MT	USD	MT	USD	MT
World	85,728,506	106,326	73,728,574	90,909	75,106,460	77,658
EU	14,976,630	14,453	15,287,934	14,718	22,057,982	17,266
Paraguay	3,639,471	11,960	4,302,383	13,850	5,269,150	12,603
Brazil	22,498,634	24,058	20,769,058	21,928	12,253,006	12,120
Russia	12,821,074	16,172	73,806,692	9,731	8,729,692	10,985
U.S.	13,598,583	13,856	11,923,921	10,738	15,070,093	10,072

Source: FAS Buenos Aires, based on data from the Global Trade Atlas

Fresh Pear Exports – Main Destinations			
Partner Country	2015	2016	2017

	USD	MT	USD	MT	USD	MT
World	283,076,504	333,090	270,040,941	310,011	256,971,634	279,623
Brazil	106,045,472	119,284	88,839,559	99,467	82,857,510	91,638
Russia	50,400,484	68,661	48,270,683	64,831	56,536,209	69,942
EU	48,732,386	59,262	55,475,021	63,983	45,907,558	48,322
U.S.	44,276,791	47,093	41,220,029	42,366	38,824,932	35,090
Paraguay	796,683	2,518	1,481,014	4,632	2,864,356	6,822

Source: FAS Buenos Aires, based on data from the Global Trade Atlas

Total fresh apple and pear exports during CY 2017 decreased by approximately 14 percent and 10 percent, respectively, compared to 2016, due to lower production and Argentina's ongoing loss of competitiveness in international markets.

During the first part of the calendar year, apple and pear exports are destined for overseas markets (mainly Europe and the U.S.) and, during the last semester, exports are mostly oriented to Mercosur countries. Traditionally, Brazil has been more flexible than other markets, such as the EU and the U.S., regarding the quality of the fruit imported but import conditions are becoming more strict there as well.

The United States has been a reliable and stable market for Argentine apples and pears, especially for organic products, whose demand continues to grow steadily. However, during the current marketing season, prices have not been as favorable for local exporters compared to prices paid in the EU.

India opened the market to Argentine apples and pears in CY 2016 but exports have been negligible.

In addition, the Chinese market was opened in 2014 although shipments have not been significant so far due to stringent import requirements.

On March 24, 2015, the Government of Brazil closed the market to Argentine apples and pears due to the detection of *Cydia pomonella* (Carpocapsa) in Villa Regina, Rio Negro province. After audits by Brazilian phytosanitary inspectors in the main apple and pear growing region of the country, on June 17, 2015, the Brazilian market was reopened. However, the local fruit sector considers the protocol negotiated by the Argentine and Brazilian phytosanitary authorities to be too stringent, which has hindered shipment flows. CY 2016, apple and pear exports to Brazil decreased by 9 percent and 17 percent, respectively, compared to the previous calendar year. In CY 2017, exports to Brazil regained regularity under strict phytosanitary conditions.

After Russia imposed an import ban on EU fruit in August 2014 (which was recently extended to December 31st, 2018) Russia sought other sources of supply. Argentina was unable to take advantage of the opportunity to increase exports to the Russian market, especially for pears, due to its lack of competitiveness (e.g. unfavorable exchange rate) and the devaluation of the ruble followed by a recession in the Russian economy. However, during CY 2017, apple exports to Russia increased by 13 percent and pear exports increased by 8 percent, compared to the previous year, as a result of less fruit availability in the Northern Hemisphere countries. Exports to the EU increased by 17 percent for apples due less fruit availability in the Northern Hemisphere, and decreased by 25 percent for pears,

primarily as a result of strong competition from South Africa. Paraguay was the second largest market for Argentine apples and the fifth largest market for local pears as it is less stringent than traditional markets such as the U.S. and the EU in its quality demands.

For organic products, the United Kingdom and the United States are traditional markets for Argentine organic apples and pears. Overall, the British and German markets are projected to remain stable and the U.S. market to continue to grow. In the U.K. there is a broader distribution of organic fruit, while in the U.S. organic fruit is primarily sold in specialty retail stores.

Imports

Argentina is a net producer of apples and pears and as such imports are normally negligible except when supply or production actors change significantly. In 2017, apple imports totaled 10,000 MT, mainly from Chile, and pear imports totaled 400 MT, primarily from Brazil.

Policy:

Government Support to Producers

The provincial governments in Rio Negro and Neuquen have traditionally provided financial support to apple and pear producers across a broad spectrum of circumstances including natural disasters, insurance and employment costs and other operational expenses. During CY 2016, the Argentine government contributed USD\$7 million, and the governments of Rio Negro and Neuquen provinces contributed USD\$6 million each to support the fruit harvest. The sector lobbied for additional financial assistance from the national government to implement an updated phytosanitary program and cover costs of fruit pruning.

In CY 2017, the Argentine government contributed USD\$10 million and the Province of Rio Negro (GRN) USD\$3.5 million to producer support. The GRN also provided subsidies to smaller producers whose farms had been seriously affected by hail storms. It provided USD\$320 per hectare to producers with 50-100 hectares, and USD\$290 per hectare to producers with 0-50 hectares. In addition, it contributed USD\$1 million to finance a program aimed at eradicating 3,000 hectares of abandoned fruit land with phytosanitary problems that posed a risk to the region.

On May 1, 2017, a comprehensive Agricultural Emergency Law, included measures to help the fruit producers in the Upper Valley by providing tax deferrals for up to one year. Although the temporary assistance was helpful to the industry, significant structural changes are urgently needed for long-term viability.

Import and Export Regulations

In December 2015, the Macri government lifted export taxes on all fruits. In addition, one year later, export rebates were increased for several products, including apples and pears, to provide support to regional rural economies. Initially, the removal of export taxes had a significant impact in international markets as it made Argentine agricultural commodities more competitive. However, that benefit has

largely been offset by high inflation rates and production cost increases. In addition, the government removed a seven percent export rebate for fruit shipped from Patagonian ports last year.

Below are tables on current tariffs, taxes, and rebates for apples and pears:

Fresh Apples (0808.10) & Pears (0808.30)	
Outside the Mercosur area	
Import Tariff (%)	10.00
Statistical Tax (%)	0.50
Export tax (%)	0.00
Export Rebate (%) Bulk (apples)	6.90
Export Rebate (%) Bulk (pears)	6.20
Export Rebate (%) Cases containing between 2.5 Kg. and 20 Kg.	8.50
Cases containing 2.5 Kg. or less	9.50
Within the Mercosur area	
Import tariff (%)	0.00
Export tax (%)	0.00
Export Rebate (%) Bulk (apples)	6.90
Export Rebate (%) Bulk (pears)	6.20
Export Rebate (%) Cases containing between 2.5 and 20 kg.	8.50
Cases containing 2.5 kg. or less	9.50

Source: FAS Buenos Aires based on data from Tarifar

Export and Import Restrictions

Since 2010, the Argentine government has had an import substitution policy to reduce imports and support domestic production.. Under this policy, producers have struggled to obtain imported inputs, such as agrochemicals, and agricultural machinery and equipment, which necessitated the purchase of locally manufactured products (when available), often at higher costs. Since 2015, the Macri administration has encouraged imports but options continue to be restricted.

Phytosanitary Issues

Under SENASA Resolution No. 98/2015 a Phytosanitary Emergency was announced due to reiterated fruit fly (*Ceratitis capitata* Wied.) findings in Villa Regina, Province of Rio Negro. In addition, by SENASA Resolution No. 170/2016, dated April 6, 2016, the President of SENASA declared a Phytosanitary Emergency due to reiterated fruit fly findings in Neuquen Province. SENASA has implemented the corresponding phytosanitary measures, including cold treatment (in transit or at destination), to all shipments originating in these regulated area.

Marketing:

Prices

In 2017 average FOB prices for apples and pears were higher than 2016, but still not sufficient to cover costs, resulting in increased financial difficulties for the local fruit sector and damaging Argentine exporters’ competitiveness in export markets. The following tables show average export prices for apples and pears:

FOB Prices (USD/MT) Fresh Apples			
Month	2015	2016	2017
Jan	756	696	632

Feb	791	705	857
Mar	839	805	939
Apr	909	862	1,080
May	885	904	1,108
Jun	876	891	1,132
Jul	831	874	1,061
Aug	696	655	751
Sep	615	667	700
Oct	604	721	710
Nov	678	752	708
Dec	623	671	663
Average	759	767	862

Source: FAS Buenos Aires, based on data from the Global Trade Atlas

Note: Exchange rate: Argentine Pesos 24.83/USD1

Date of Quote: 05/16/2018

FOB Prices (USD/MT) Fresh Pears			
Month	2015	2016	2017
Jan	921	794	880
Feb	858	866	924
Mar	840	850	911
Apr	849	880	904
May	850	893	895
Jun	824	927	906
Jul	863	914	932
Aug	881	874	925
Sep	878	834	939
Oct	792	841	973
Nov	835	892	1,042
Dec	836	883	1,024
Average	852	871	938

Source: FAS Buenos Aires, based on data from the Global Trade Atlas

Note: Exchange rate: Argentine Pesos 24.83/USD1

Date of Quote: 05/16/2018

Retail prices are as follows:

Retail Prices (USD/kg) – May 2018		
	Variety	Price (US\$/kg)
Pears	Williams (Premium)	1.61
	Williams (Standard)	1.31
	Beurre Bosc	1.51
	Red Bartlett	1.71
Apples	Red Delicious (Premium)	2.13
	Red Delicious (Standard)	1.45
	Granny Smith (Premium)	2.82
	Granny Smith (Standard)	2.01
	Rome	2.01
	Golden Delicious	2.01

Source: FAS Buenos Aires, based on data from local supermarkets and grocery stores

For fresh organic apples and pears, retail prices vary between 5-20 percent higher than prices of conventional fruit, depending on the fruit variety. Organic fruit is sold in the domestic market as conventional fruit when exporters cannot compete in international markets.

The following table illustrates average wholesale prices for all varieties of fresh apples and pears:

Apples, Pears, and Table Grapes, Fresh Domestic Wholesale Prices for all Varieties (USD/kg)						
	2015		2016		2017	
	Apples	Pears	Apples	Pears	Apples	Pears
January	0.98	0.70	1.26	0.58	1.36	0.80
February	0.93	0.67	1.07	0.76	1.27	0.95
March	0.72	0.65	0.98	0.83	1.09	0.84
April	0.74	0.63	0.91	0.64	1.11	0.91
May	0.72	0.52	0.86	0.55	1.17	0.76
June	0.83	0.53	0.90	0.51	1.21	0.77
July	0.85	0.47	1.03	0.55	1.21	0.80
August	0.93	0.50	1.12	0.54	1.29	0.88
September	0.96	0.49	1.26	0.56	1.41	0.94
October	1.07	0.50	1.22	0.61	1.13	0.75
November	1.11	0.60	1.40	0.65	1.36	0.77
December	1.22	0.65	1.50	0.72	1.15	0.86
Annual Avg	0.92	0.58	1.13	0.63	1.23	0.84

Source: FAS Buenos Aires, based on data provided by the Buenos Aires Central Market

Production, Supply and Distribution Tables:

Apples, Fresh Market Begin Year	2015/2016		2016/2017		2017/2018	
	Jan 2016		Jan 2017		Jan 2018	
	USDA Official	New Post	USDA Official	New Post	USDA Official	New Post
Argentina						
Area Planted	22000	22000	20000	20000	20000	20000
Area Harvested	18600	18600	14000	13000	14000	13000
Bearing Trees	16900	16900	18000	16000	18000	16000
Non-Bearing Trees	2900	2900	3000	2600	3000	2600
Total Trees	19800	19800	21000	18600	21000	18600
Commercial Production	600000	600000	530000	560000	550000	530000
Non-Comm. Production	0	0	0	0	0	0
Production	600000	600000	530000	560000	550000	530000
Imports	3100	3100	6000	10000	6000	10000
Total Supply	603100	603100	536000	570000	556000	540000
Fresh Dom. Consumption	282200	282200	260000	260000	270000	260000
Exports	90900	90900	76000	78000	80000	90000
For Processing	230000	230000	200000	232000	206000	190000
Withdrawal From Market	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Distribution	603100	603100	536000	570000	556000	540000
(HA) ,(1000 TREES) ,(MT)						

Pears, Fresh Market Begin Year	2015/2016		2016/2017		2017/2018	
	Jan 2016		Jan 2017		Jan 2018	
	USDA Official	New Post	USDA Official	New Post	USDA Official	New Post
Argentina						
Area Planted	23500	23500	26500	26500	26500	26500
Area Harvested	22200	22200	22000	20000	22000	20000

Bearing Trees	18200	18200	20500	18000	20500	18000
Non-Bearing Trees	3500	3500	3700	3200	3700	3200
Total Trees	21700	21700	24200	21200	24200	21200
Commercial Production	580000	580000	530000	540000	600000	530000
Non-Comm. Production	0	0	0	0	0	0
Production	580000	580000	530000	540000	600000	530000
Imports	600	600	400	400	400	400
Total Supply	580600	580600	530400	540400	600400	530400
Fresh Dom. Consumption	100600	100600	95400	100000	120000	90000
Exports	310000	310000	270000	280000	280000	290000
For Processing	170000	170000	165000	160400	200400	150400
Withdrawal From Market	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Distribution	580600	580600	530400	540400	600400	530400
(HA) ,(1000 TREES) ,(MT)						