

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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Chile

Post: Santiago

Fresh Fruit plantings severely hit by spring frost

Report Categories:

Fresh Fruit

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Report Highlights:

Government estimated at US\$ 820 million losses for exporters of fruit due to severe spring frosts. This has been the most serious losses due to weather that has affected Chilean Agriculture since 1929.

General Information:

During the week of September 16, 2013 several days of heavy frosts were recorded in north and central fruit producing areas, specifically from the 3rd to the 7th region, with the most severe frost on September 17, when thermometers reached between - 4 to - 5° C for 5 hours in the Metropolitan Region (RM) and region VI. This has been the worst frost recorded since 1929.

According to the initial information provided by the Ministry of Agriculture, the regions hardest hit were the Metropolitan Region and Region VI. The fruits most affected were kiwis with an estimated 60 percent loss, almonds with 50 percent loss and cherries, peaches, nectarines and plums with a 40 percent loss. In some areas damages to Blueberries were reported to be as high as 80 percent; grapes for wine and table grapes were also badly affected. Walnuts were also damaged to some extent in various production areas.

The Ministry of Agriculture reported that the impact on fruit production is initially estimated to reduce export earnings up to US\$411 million for the 2013-2014 season, this is equivalent to 62 million boxes of fruit not exported, which represents a 22 percent of the total exported in 2012.

Damage in other regions

Table grapes, in Region III, were affected by a heavy frost on September 16, substantial damages could be observed in different sectors and varieties. Flames were reported as to be the most damaged variety together with some fields of Thompson seedless.

For Blueberry, the hardest hit was Region IV and Region VI were loses could reach as much as 40 percent.

At the Fresh Fruit Producers Federation (FEDEFRUTA) conference, officials stated that for many fruit varieties it is hard to estimate the losses as the fruit affected were at different flowering stages which makes it difficult to accurately quantify damages. FEDEFRUTA added that the loss that affects the sector of fresh fruit will have also an impact in labor, since producers will need less than the usual workforce during spring and summer. As a result they estimate that the total loss to the fruit sector economy could reach as much as US\$820 million.