

Uruguay



Uruguay returns on a high

Exhibiting for the second time as a national entity, Uruguay is keen to focus particular attention on its rapidly expanding blueberry business

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South America's smallest fresh produce exporter Uruguay has a long history in the citrus and topfruit trades and is now keen to gain increasing notoriety on the blueberry scene. With that in mind, this year the country will participate at Fruit Logistica for the second time with a 24m² national pavilion sponsored by the Uruguayan Union of Fresh Produce Growers and Exporters (Upefruy).

"Europe is a very important market for Uruguayan blueberries, especially the UK, the Netherlands, Germany and Spain," explains Upefruy's Marta Bentancur. "We have invited a number of blueberry suppliers to join us in Berlin and so far 17 companies have confirmed participation."

Uruguay expects to ship some 1,200 tonnes of blueberries to Europe and the US during 2009/10. In terms of citrus, Europe and Russia absorb 70-80 per cent of the national crop. The UK in particular is a key market (especially for easy peelers and

mandarins), followed by Spain (oranges) and the Netherlands and Scandinavia (easy peelers and oranges). The remainder of the volume is shipped to Canada and Asia, plus negotiations remain underway to open up the US market.

CAPUTTO

Uruguay's largest fresh produce supplier Citricola Salteña (Caputto) is looking forward to a better citrus deal in 2010 when the season begins in February, following the difficulties of 2009 due to a drought at the beginning of the year.

"Fortunately, a good level of rainfall fell in Uruguay during the spring period (September to October), so we're confident production will be better in 2010," César Caputto (pictured right) tells Eurofruit Magazine. "It's still a bit too early to say, but things are looking good."

Last season's drought impacted on sizes, particularly in the orange category, according to Mr Caputto, while easy peelers escaped relatively unscathed.

"As a company, Caputto exported around 20 per cent less citrus than our pre-season



estimate last year," Mr Caputto notes. "On the other hand, we had very good quality on arrival, which is important. Plus, the easy peeler market performed well (because South Africa and Peru shipped less volume, meaning there was no oversupply) and despite the size issues it was also a good year for oranges due to the lower volume."

Right now, Uruguay's citrus industry is eagerly anticipating the opening of the US market, according to Mr Caputto. "We're very close to access," he reveals. "Maybe next year we will get the green light."

URUGUAY

MAXTEND

Controlled-atmosphere system specialist MAXtend is in the process of establishing a business in Uruguay as the country's blueberry exporters look to expand on the US market via seafreight shipments.

"We are going to commence MAXtend operations in Uruguay and will appoint an agent or distributor in the market,"



Sanjay Savur, deputy general manager and MAXtend unit leader in Australia tells Eurofruit Magazine.

"At the moment Uruguay airfreights blueberries to the US but in order to be competitive as volume increases, exporters need to look at using seafreight with controlled atmosphere (CA) technology. We have a significant market share for blueberry shipments from Chile to the US

(approximately 500 FEUs last season) so we were approached by some exporters from Uruguay about starting a MAXtend operation in the country."

Mr Savur says a flexible system like MAXtend may suit Uruguayan exporters and shipping lines because they do not need to use a dedicated CA fleet. "MAXtend is a portable one-trip system that converts a standard reefer container to CA capability for one voyage," he explains. "Our controller is removed at the end of the voyage and the container is restored to its original condition."

Although no firm start date has been agreed yet, MAXtend plans to carry out some trials in Uruguay this year before establishing the necessary infrastructure and training local technicians.

UNIVEG URUGUAY

Univeg Uruguay (formerly Forbel) is continuing to invest in the production of citrus and blueberries, while, at the same time, working to be as efficient as possible during the challenging economic times.

The group operates in excess of 600ha in Paysandú, north-western Uruguay, planted with some 160,000 citrus groves and 60,000 blueberry plants, and is almost approaching the end of a five-year investment plan which will see production expand by more than 60 per cent.

"The biggest developments we've made recently (in terms of the level of investment made and the standard of technology achieved) has been the in field of production," explains Univeg Uruguay managing director Jumil Crouzet.

"Approximately 30 per cent of our citrus groves have been converted to more high density planting per hectare and thermal pest control systems have been installed on both our citrus and blueberry plantations with the objective of producing fruit without the application of chemicals, which




will no doubt boost our competitive edge. In the area of post-harvest, we've also expanded the capacity of our de-greening chambers (for citrus) by 500 tonnes."

The Uruguayan blueberry season started almost two weeks later than usual in ▶

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2009, according to Mr Crouzet, due to adverse weather conditions, most notably the level of rainfall, which was much higher than the historical average.

"Volume is going to be down but it's still too early to talk about definite figures," he reveals. "The flooding in Paysandú (which extended all along the Uruguayan-Argentinean coastline) was not only caused by huge amounts of rainfall in the region itself but also by heavy rains in Brazil."

Mr Crouzet says the citrus industry is looking forward to a better run of luck when the new season gets underway in late February/early March, particularly as negotiations to access the lucrative US market look to be gaining traction.

"Both the citrus-producing sector and the authorities in Uruguay have for some time been working tirelessly to secure access to the US," he points out. "The opening up of the market would give a huge boost to Uruguayan citrus production and exports."

TERMINAL TCP

The Port of Montevideo has consolidated its position as a major transshipment hub in South America with the inauguration of the newly expanded TCP (Terminal Cuenca del Plata) reefer container terminal following a US\$200m investment to triple refrigerated cargo capacity.

"The expansion project is the most important since the modernisation of the Port of Montevideo in 1908," explains TCP's international relations manager Fernando Correa. "We've extended the existing quay by 350m, making it suitable for ships with up to 10,000 containers. TCP now benefits from 22ha of additional loading bay area and four new cranes."

Owned in part by Belgian group Katoen Natie, TCP – Uruguay's largest reefer container hub – handles 2,700 reefers each year or 3,600 TEUs. However, the facility has the capacity to handle 11,000 TEUs annually, meaning further expansion is on the cards.



"By 2012, TCP will handle 8,150 TEUs per year, plus we're constructing a further 58ha of area with additional cranes," says Mr Correa. "The final phase of the expansion project will be completed by 2020, so we're on our way to achieving maximum capacity."

PAMER

Specialising in the fruit industry, Uruguayan corrugated cardboard manufacturer Pamer sees increasing potential to expand in Argentina, according to commercial manager Joaquín Costas (pictured below).

"Uruguay is quite a closed market since Pamer handles the packaging needs of around 50 per cent of the fruit industry, including 90 per cent of the citrus sector," explains Mr Costas. "Already we're working with the country's leading citrus exporters Caputto, Urud'Or and Terminal Frutera (a subsidiary of the San Miguel group), among others

"Across in Argentina, meanwhile, Pamer supplies packaging to many citrus exporters," Mr Costas continues. "Since 1999, Pamer has manufactured open top



Plaform cartons under a licence from Cartonajes International in Spain (part of the International Paper group).

Pamer produces 40m cartons per year at its plant in Mercedes, which located 300km from the Uruguayan capital Montevideo. With over 60 years' experience in the business, Mr Costas says the company is well positioned to meet the latest requirements from both the Uruguayan and Argentinean export sectors.

FRIGORÍFICO MODELO

Uruguay's largest packing and coldstorage facility Frigorífico Modelo opened to the trade back in May 2008, offering 2,000m² of coldstorage capacity and 1,000m² of office space across a total area spanning some 15,000m².

Servicing the fresh and processed fruit sectors (primarily citrus, apples and blueberries) as well as the meat industry, Frigorífico Modelo handles approximately 20,000 tonnes of fresh citrus per year, as well as 18,000-19,000 tonnes of fresh apples and pears and 100 tonnes of fresh blueberries, according to deputy manager Fernando Silva.

"With 15,000m² of land, we have the space to expand if there's demand in the future, which is just as well seeing as we're already working with some of the biggest suppliers in Uruguay as well as Argentinean companies with local interests," Mr Silva says. "We're just 11km from the Port of Montevideo too."

AGRO FRESH

Trading company Agro Fresh handles mainly apples produced by Frutisur as well as citrus, blueberries and persimmon for export to Europe, Canada, Russia and the Middle East. The group also distributes Honduran grapefruit and Brazilian citrus.



In recognition of Uruguay's rising presence on the global fresh produce market, Eurofruit Magazine brings to Uruguay its annual conference and exhibition event for the Southern Hemisphere for the first time at the end of 2010.

Taking place at the Conrad Hotel on 1-3 December in Uruguay's exclusive and popular tourist resort of Punta del Este, the Eurofruit Congress Southern Hemisphere aims to attract over 400 local and international fresh fruit and vegetable industry representatives, key decision makers, retailers, buyers and service providers.

The three-day event will throw a spotlight on Uruguay as a supplier as well as offer a focus on the current issues shaping the Southern Hemisphere's fresh produce trade via presentations, panel discussions and general debates.

Gold sponsors already include Upefruy, Caputto and Fruit Logística. Registrations will open shortly online at eurofruitcongress.com/sh.

"Agro Fresh expects to export 1,200 tonnes of apples in 2010, which is similar to last year," explains commercial director Alexis Darricarrère (pictured above). "Frutisur is a new project so initially we estimated a significant increase in production for 2010 with the maturation of orchards. However, due to climate issues, Uruguay's apple crop is set to fall by approximately 50-60 per cent in 2010."

Frutisur was certified by GlobalGAP last year and Agro Fresh has for sometime been an official distributor of Pink Lady apples. In 2010, Mr Darricarrère says the secret to success will be quality. "Good quality products are the most in demand now and garner a significantly different price in comparison to those items which arrive with problems," he concludes. ■



Eurofruit Congress

Southern Hemisphere



Punta del Este, Uruguay, 1-3 December 2010

■ Eurofruit Congress Southern Hemisphere

Eurofruit Congress Southern Hemisphere, the leading annual conference and exhibition event for the Southern Hemisphere's fresh fruit and vegetable industry, takes place in Uruguay, on 1-3 December 2010.

The three-day event will offer outstanding opportunities to network with industry decision makers from all over the world as well as debate and discuss the current issues affecting the region's fruit and vegetable export markets.

Some 400 delegates are expected to attend the event in Uruguay. If you would like to raise your company profile and showcase your products or services by sponsoring or exhibiting at Eurofruit Congress Southern Hemisphere, please contact info@eurofruitcongress.com

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