

ARGENTINE

Argentina gains India lemon access

South American nation's largest lemon-producing region of Tucuman buoyed by news of deal. A sanitary protocol has been signed allowing the export of Argentine lemons to India. Opening up opportunities and extending bilateral trade, the deal was signed by Argentine Prime Minister Marucio Macri and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi in the month of February.

"The negotiation of the protocol for the entry of lemons was a very extensive process that culminated today in a successful manner; It is part of the ongoing effort to open up new opportunities for Argentine products," said Horacio Reyser, secretary of international economic relations of the Argentine Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "In the last three years we have opened more than 170 markets in more than 50 countries," he noted.

It is reported that in exchange, India will be able to export guar and millet seed to Argentina. According to Citizen Association of Northwest Argentina (ACNOA) the agreement is of strategic importance as India has reportedly agreed to work with Argentina to achieve rapid access for other products like orange, grapefruit and tangerine. It was also reported the deal was good news for regional economies in Argentina's Tucuman province as the main producer of citrus in the country.

AZERBAIJAN

Azerbaijan promotes agriculture and food industry

For the last couple of years, Azerbaijan is paying special attention to the implementation of agrarian reforms and the development of agriculture. Production in the agriculture, hunting and fishing sector increased by an annual average of approximately 4.6 percent from 2015-2018 to more than \$4 billion in 2018, according to the book published by the German-Azerbaijani Chamber of Commerce.



For 2019-2020, the government expects annual average growth of 4.7 percent. The food and beverage industry, with annual production worth around \$2 billion, accounts for about one-third of the output from Azerbaijan's manufacturing industry.

The agriculture, hunting and fishing sector contributed approximately 5.5 percent of the country's added value in 2017 and employed 1.8 million people, two-fifths of the Azerbaijani workforce.

The programs for expanding the manufacture and processing of agricultural products that have been adopted in recent years and those still at the planning stage should contribute to greater self-sufficiency in the food and beverage industry, as well as to increased exports from the non-oil sector. The expansion initiatives apply to product groups including nuts, citrus fruits, tea, rice, tobacco, wine, livestock production and the fishing industry.

Azerbaijan has ambitious plans for pomegranate production. The Azerbaijan Pomegranate Manufacturers and Exporters Association reports that construction of a processing complex is planned for 2019-2021; it will cost about \$15 million. The project is for the construction of two factories to produce pomegranate concentrate and juices and two further plants to shell and process seed. Pomegranate production almost doubled during 2012-2017, from 82,500 tonnes to 156,800 tonnes. Russia is currently the main market for Azerbaijani pomegranates. From 2019, producers

also intend to increase exports of unprocessed pomegranates, mainly to EU countries.

BANGLADESH

Bangladeshi mango granted GI

A geographical indicator (GI) tag has been granted to the Khirsapat mango, popularly known as Himsagar, in a development expected to open up branding opportunities for local Bangladesh growers. Growers in the Chapai Nawabganj region in the north-western part of Bangladesh can expect the new GI to help strengthen the mango industry, according to the country's industries minister, Nurul Majid Mahmud Humayun. It is the third product, joining Bangladesh's national fish and popular textile.

"This will widen the opportunity for branding Bangladesh," said Humayun at the GI certificate handover ceremony. The Chapai Nawabganj region is the largest producer of Himsagar mango, and the second most grown variety after Ashwina.

It was reported that increasing amounts of land are being brought under mango cultivation, with farmers showing interest in commercial cultivation to meet growing domestic demand and cater to export markets.

An official from the Department of Patents, Designs and Trademarks (DPDT) said farmers will be able to utilise the GI tag by 2020, and if all procedures are

completed swiftly the tag could be available as soon as this summer. The Himsagar mango's season runs between mid-April and mid-June and as of previous years, 41,680ha were under cultivation according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

Mango farmers will have to complete the necessary procedure to become authorised users of the GI tag which will comprise the logo of the DPDT as well as a logo to be developed by the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute. India currently also holds GI status for the Himsagar mango as a product of West Bengal.

CHILE

Chilean cherries land at Indian seaport

NGK Trading has received its first sea shipment of Chilean cherries sent by Exportadora Del Sur and Natire South Exports

A seafreight shipment of Chilean cherries has recently landed successfully at a port in India.

The fruit was released on 30 January, to importer NGK Trading on the ground, after its 43-day journey. NGK Trading said it's the first seafreight shipment of Chilean cherries to be received by an Indian trader.

Gagan Khosla, NGK Trading CEO told media that the quality is excellent and the fruit held up well in transit. He also noted that the cost of seafreight was some 30 per cent less than airfreight.

"The fruit is being sold through conventional wholesale, as retailers are too scared," noted Khosla.

"We hope to multiply this next season and expect tremendous growth in demand in coming seasons due to lower prices and excellent quality. The packers did a phenomenal job.

"The Chilean cherry demand has been growing annually for few seasons and now seafreight will open floodgates," he said.

The fruit was shipped by Exportadora Del Sur and Natire South Exports, and received by NGK Trading. Chile and India have been building bilateral trade since 2006 when the two countries signed a partial scope agreement which was renewed in 2017.

EUROPEAN UNION

EU to launch fruit and vegetable observatory

The Move will improve transparency and enable sector to cope more effectively with market volatility. The European Commission is to launch new market observatories, for fruit and vegetables, to bring greater transparency to these sectors and help them to address market volatility.

The observatories, which are due to begin operating during the second half of this year, will provide a wide range of market data complemented by market analysis, short-term outlook reports and medium-term prospects. A board of market experts for each sector will also meet regularly to discuss the state of each market.

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The Commission said the focus of the fruit and vegetable observatory would be principally on tomatoes, apples, citrus, peaches and nectarines. "These observatories will bring greater transparency and analysis to two key sectors for European agriculture," the Commission said in a statement. As these sectors represent around 24 per cent of the EU's agricultural output value.

The Commission already operates similar observatories for crops, sugar, meat and milk. Ximo Puig, president of the regional government of Valencia, Generalitat Valenciana, said the observatory would benefit the citrus sector, and that the Generalitat "will do everything possible to ensure that it is active before the start of next season".

ITALY

Italian Tarocco and Moro oranges arrive in China

Italian red oranges Tarocco and Moro have arrived by sea from Italy into China. In Ningbo, Zhejiang, an inaugural ceremony was held in Shanghai, in Dahua, at Jinxiu Dongjiao Industrial Park, the blood oranges was the attraction during a business event organized with the aim to get them known and spread in the markets. Salvo Laudani and Sara Grasso, manager of the Italian pioneer company Oranfrizer, that made the first export of red oranges to China, attended the event together with Ludovica Murazzani of the Italian General Consulate in Shanghai, Massimiliano Tremitterra, director of the

ICE Office in Shanghai, Mao Hong Ming of Ningbo Texstar Trading & Industry co Ltd, the Chinese importer who is already introducing Italian oranges to China.

"Italy boasts a worldwide fame for our high quality production, the blood orange is part of this precious food heritage - affirms Nello Alba, CEO of Oranfrizer - we preserve the cultivation in Sicily, where thanks to the microclimate and rich soils, we harvest excellent blood oranges in color, taste and organoleptic features. For more than 50 years we have been working to enhance and distribution of blood orange both in Italy and abroad, with its distinctive, unique and inimitable characteristics, immediately appreciated where unfamiliar. Through this first Chinese market trial we exported the varieties of pigmented oranges Tarocco and Moro. We will continue to invest in agriculture and innovation in our Sicilian crops, creating new conditions and development opportunities for the future, increasing the occasions and consumption habits, both in Italy and beyond the European borders,. Because unique specialties like Italian blood orange deserve to be known all over the world."

"The entry of Italian oranges to the Chinese market - explains Ludovica Murazzani of the Italian General Consulate in Shanghai - is a success achieved through specific negotiations conducted by the Italian government with the competent Chinese authorities, with the dual aim of supporting the Italian economy and our producers and at the same time to satisfy the Chinese demand

for healthy, safe and evident quality food products. Therefore we attribute very high importance to the arrival of the first containers from Italy to China, in the context of the growing trade interchange between the two countries, which registered record in 2018 with a very rapid growth of the agri-food sector in China":

MEXICO

Mixed results for Mexican avocados

Shipment volumes rose sharply last year following production issues in 2017 but export values hit by lower prices. Mexican avocado exports increased by 21 per cent to 1.198m tonnes in 2018, but the corresponding value fell by 11.7 per cent to US\$2.392bn according to data from the Bank of Mexico and the Agri-Food and Fisheries Information System. The results were due to higher avocado prices in 2017 following weather-related supply issues.

Mario Andrade of the National Agricultural Council said Mexico had managed to increase its presence in different markets last year. "The question is do you want to sell half of your product for 100 pesos, or all of your product for 50 pesos? It's practically the same in economic terms...but you generate a greater market share if you deliver more product at a lower price to the consumer, so he would rather sell more avocado, even if it is cheaper, than less at a very high price," he said in an interview with El Financiero. Mexico currently supplies 60-65 per cent of all the avocados consumed globally, most of which go to the US.

The industry is looking to take on a more significant role in the European and Asian markets to take advantage of growing demand. According to the Mexican Association of Avocado Producers and Exporters (APEAM), exports to Canada increased by 22 per cent last year from 60,877 tonnes to 74,358 tonnes. Exports to China rose by 108 per cent from 6,298 tonnes to 13,750 tonnes, while the Japanese market saw a 15 per cent increase, climbing from 46,200 tonnes to 53,100 tonnes.



NEW ZEALAND

Favourable forecast for NZ apples and pears

Slight increase in volume tipped, with new plantings and varietal development driving industry growth. As the 2019 season draws closer, the New Zealand apple and pear industry is preparing for a modest year-on-year increase in crop volume. Peak body New Zealand Apples & Pears has predicted a gross crop of 604,500 tonnes, 2.5 per cent up on last year, although average fruit sizing is expected to be smaller.

Growing conditions have been mostly favourable to date, with the season running around a week later than last year in Hawke's Bay, while timing in Nelson is on par with 2018. "Notwithstanding some hail in Central Otago, growing conditions across the rest of New Zealand this season have been very good," said New Zealand Apples & Pears chief executive, Alan Pollard. "Adequate rainfall means that all regions have good quantities of irrigation water, and sunlight and warmth are at some of the best levels that we have seen."

"The broad portfolio of varieties that we offer has changed dramatically since the mid-2000, when Royal Gala and Braeburn accounted for almost 80% of New Zealand exports," Pollard explained. "Today, Royal Gala remains our largest export variety accounting for around 30 per cent of total exports. But varieties such as Braeburn continue to decline, with that particular variety's planted area down 7 per cent over 2018 and expected export volumes down 8 per cent for 2019."

PERU

Peruvian citrus in line for double-digit growth

Production of Peruvian citrus increases expected to lead to a rise in exports in 2019. Peruvian citrus exports are on course to reach 200,000 tonnes this year, an increase of 10 per cent on the 180,239 tonnes shipped during 2018.

Sergio Del Castillo, general manager of producer association ProCitrus, said the rise was largely down to a surge in man-



darin exports, led by the W. Murcott and Tango varieties.

Investments in new farms in La Libertad, Lambayeque and Piura, together with a switch to newer mandarin varieties in central coastal regions like Lima and Ica are fuelling the rise in citrus production in Peru. Del Castillo said patented varieties would play an increasingly important role in Peru's exports in the coming years.

Separately, Promperú reported that the 300 Peruvian companies that took part in this month's Fruit Logistica trade fair in Berlin secured commercial commitments worth around US\$230m. Blueberries, mandarins and avocado were the most sought after products by the international buyers who visited the Peruvian pavilion.

Promperú said German supermarkets including Aldi, Lidl, Edeka, Rewe and Kaufland have been steadily expanding their Peruvian produce offer to incorporate products such as turmeric, ginger and pomegranates to more commonplace lines such as grapes, avocados, citrus and mangoes.

UNITED STATES

U.S. pilot program allows online grocery shopping with food stamps

The U.S. Department of Agriculture said it has launched a pilot program in New York that allows consumers dependent on food stamps to use them to buy groceries online, a move that is likely to

boost sales at retailers like Walmart Inc. and Amazon.com Inc.

Food stamps are part of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, which provides free food to some 40 million Americans, or about 12 percent of the total U.S. population. "People who receive SNAP benefits should have the opportunity to shop for food the same way more and more Americans shop for food – by ordering and paying for groceries online," U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue said in a statement. Walmart, the world's largest retailer, already has 40 stores in other parts of the country that allow shoppers to pay for groceries ordered online using food stamps.

The new program will expand to Alabama, Iowa, Maryland, Nebraska, New Jersey, Oregon and Washington, and additional retailers are expected to take part, the USDA said. Walmart spokeswoman Molly Blakeman said the company has nearly 275 stores that offer grocery pickup in the nine states eligible for the pilot.

Amazon, the world's largest online retailer, in a blog post on Thursday said New York customers can shop on AmazonFresh and Prime Pantry without requiring a membership fee. "Amazon believes the program will dramatically increase access to food for more remote customers and help to mitigate the public health crisis of food deserts," the retailer said. The pilot program will involve the use of electronic benefit (EBT) cards issued by New York to allow for the online purchases. ♦