China opens its borders to the Argentine blueberry

After five years of negotiations, the Argentine government has gained access to the Chinese market of the national production of blueberries. However, given that the blueberry season in the Andean country has already ended, its exports of this red fruit to China will begin next season, in August 2018.

The opening of the Chinese market to the exports of blueberries coming from Argentina was communicated by the Ministry of Agribusiness of said South American country, at the end of the month of December. A news, which has been very celebrated by the Argentine Committee of Blueberries, whose president, Federico Bayá, has described the signing of the protocol of this agreement with the AQSIQ as "a great opportunity and challenge that is open to the Argentine blueberry", given that, apart from the challenge of satisfying demanding consumers, access to the Chinese market requires more complex logistics, given the distance that separates both countries.

But logistics is not the only challenge, since, as explained Bayá, they have to start a commercial development because it is a market that was already open. "We have to start knowing who the players are, the main importers and the market. We know it is a large consumer market, but being so far requires to be very careful and to generate a very good image of the product", he said.

In addition, it should be noted that, in the production window of Argentine blueberries, there are also Peru and Uruguay, countries that already have access to the Chinese market a few years ago.

In this line, the president of the Argentine Committee of Blueberries has clarified that Chile does not suppose a competition since its blueberries are rather complement to the Argentine production. "Another big challenge we have is that Argentina has to pay tariffs of 30% at this time, which is a disadvantage from the economic point of view", said Bayá.

Regarding varieties, the chairman of the Committee has reported that Snow Chaser and Emerald are the ones that concentrate most of the production, although each year new genetic materials are being tested.

About the means of transport Federico Bayá has indicated that, although Argentina normally used air supplies, this year they have been forced to turn to sea transport. "In this China represents an additional challenge because transit times are even longer than Europe, but we believe it will be very difficult to send air and also pay tariffs. We believe that supply agreements will be made with the two air and maritime components, but the business is going towards the maritime and improving transport and production techniques to arrive in very good condition after 35 days of transit".

> The main objective of the Committee will be, through negotiations with the Foreign Ministry, to try to reduce or eliminate tariffs that may affect the competitiveness of the Argentine blueberry in the Chinese market

It should be noted that during the first 11 months of 2017 China imported 10,000 tons of fresh blueberries, mainly from Chile and Peru, according to information from the Ministry of Agribusiness, whose owner Luis Miguel Etchevehere said: "these agreements confirm our intention to become the supermarket of the world through the opening of more markets, thus achieving the impetus of our regional economies".

Source: Blueberries Chile

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