



By Kathy Hammond

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Chile targets truffle exports

Black perigold truffles grown in Maule could be exported to markets in Europe, Asia and the Americas by 2013



Maule regional ag secretary Anita Prizant with growers and representatives at the truffle harvest

Chile is hoping to start exports of black Perigord truffles next year.

The Chilean agriculture ministry has been supporting truffle production in the Maule region of the country through its farming innovation foundation, FIA, since 2001.

As the harvest got under way this week, regional agriculture secretary for the region Anita Prizant said: "This initiative... strengthens the competitiveness of the sector and generates new opportunities for growers in the region."

Agrobiotruf is the grower

that has been involved in the project since its inception. Partner in the business Rafael Henríquez said: "We are privileged in our region to have ideal growing conditions for black truffles; we have clearly defined seasons with temperate summers and cold winters as well as soft, good training soils that give this product its fine eating qualities.

Truffle plants take several years to come into production and even the oldest plants in the Chilean project have only been in full production for two years."

Some 150ha are planted with truffles in Chile and this is projected to increase by 60ha annually so that by 2025 Chile controls some seven to

10 per cent of the global market for the product. To date output has been destined for the domestic market, but those involved with the project are expecting to begin exports to markets such as the US, Japan, China, Spain, France and Italy next season.

This season the project enters its third phase and its next goals are to earn gastronomic recognition, set up a Chilean truffle producers association, genetic improvement of the production base and the establishment of export and import protocols.