Five small producers in San Felipe have come together to export the first ever Fairtrade-labelled table grapes from Chile to the UK in a project organised by Fedefruta and Chilean economic development agency Corfo.

The first shipments of the INIAGrape-one, a black variety developed by INIA and Consorcio Biofrutas, was shipped to the UK this week by the MiFrutaChile group.

‘MiFrutaChile is the first group in the country that has received Fairtrade certification for table grapes in Chile. It shows that its clients, who are mainly from Europe, are prepared to pay a premium for a differentiated product that helps small producers in the Aconcagua Valley,’ said Leonardo Valenzuela, who manages the project.

According to its developers, the INIAGrape-one variety has numerous advantages, such as being easy to produce, having an excellent colour and flavour profile and being able to withstand long journey times, allowing it to reach even the most distant markets.

‘Black varieties make up just 3 per cent of the global table grape market and as such they tend to be more of a niche segment for which people are prepared to pay higher prices,’ Valenzuela said. ‘By focusing on this variety we are seeking greater differentiation and better returns for our growers.’

Juan Carlos Sepúlveda of Fedefruta said the trial ‘is proof that even the smallest producers are able to access the latest genetic technology developed in Chile in order to position themselves in the main export markets’.

In this case, the grapes are being exported via Agrícola Brown and GLS Internacional, two of the leading export companies in the Aconcagua Valley.