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Wednesday 8th July 2020, 3:09 GMT

NW cherries anticipating long season



Sluggish start sees just under 10.5m boxes of dark sweet and yellow cherries shipped, with demand continuing to grow

The Northwest cherry industry has begun the 2020 deal at a slower pace than previous seasons, with just under 10.5m boxes of dark sweet and yellow cherries shipped as of 5 July.

In a release, Northwest Cherry Growers said while the season was ahead of the similarly rain-affected 2013 season, consistent high demand across domestic and export markets was creating a challenge for growers, shippers and retailers with the current volumes.

A combination of factors, including the winter-reduced early season volume and harvest delays caused by rain, led to the slower start to the season.

As the Northwest industry moves into the second half of the season, expectations of quality and promotable volume are high.

"We expect to see more growers begin Skeena harvest, which should help bolster daily shipped volumes. While reduced in volume overall compared to historical averages, our later orchards are still developing a higher volume of tonnage relative to the June portion of the crop," the statement read.

According to NW Cherry Growers, indications are pointing towards a long 2020 season ahead, opening the possibility of a strong late season performance. Core buyer cherry sales have been shown to increase by 8 per cent late into the season when aided by Northwest cherry promotions, providing growers with plenty of optimism.

Meanwhile, challenges at retail expected during the Covid-19 pandemic as led the NW Cherry Growers to develop what it says is their strongest digital consumer media programme to date.

"Though our crop volume has been reduced from pre-season expectations, it's perhaps all the more imperative to drive consumer awareness and encourage them to seek out cherries on the shelves," it said in a statement.

Korea, which recently celebrated Cherry Day with a variety of promotions, is one key example where NW Cherry Growers have been driving consumer awareness. Promotions included social media challenges, digital advertisements, podcast and radio 'callouts' and partnerships with top health and wellness sites.