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US pomegranates gain South Korean access



US pomegranates have been granted late-season access to the South Korean market

Growing conditions for pomegranates in both the US and Iran, South Korea's traditional supplier of the fruit, were not good this year, according to The Packer.

Low spring rain in the US cut flowering time, and combined with strong winds in June and October dropped the volume of premium fruit by about 50 per cent, and a spring freeze in Iran also dropped fruit volumes.

South Korean demand for US pomegranates was strong, according to Californian exporter David Miller of Ito Packing Co.

"They would easily have taken twice the amount we shipped," he explained. "It was a wild and woolly adventure."

Jeff Simonian, of Simonian Fruit Co, agreed the impromptu trade to South Korea bodes well for future seasons.

"I'd say it was fairly successful for the first year and getting a late approval," he said. "I think we can get started earlier next year, so we should move a lot more volume."

Fluctuating exchange rates between the two countries complicated matters, according to Mr Miller, with the

US dollar rising while the South Korean won dropped.

"The brokers were originally looking for number 1s, but they accepted lesser grades due to the price difference," he added.

Shipping time for US pomegranates is about half that of Iranian fruit. The fruit is sampled in South Korea for black heart rot and inspected for insects, and is fumigated on arrival.