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By Luisa Cheshire

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## California prune sales soar in UK

Latest figures reveal a 99 per cent uplift in volume and a value increase of 132 per cent compared to 2019/20



California prune sales to the UK in 2020/21 show 'phenomenal growth'

**E**xports of California Prunes to the UK have shown phenomenal growth, with the latest figures revealing a 99 per cent uplift in volume and a value increase of 132 per cent compared to 2019/20.

It mirrors the continued upturn in the popularity of California Prunes globally, with year-on-year growth also reflected in key markets like Italy, Canada, China and Hong Kong, and Japan.

The growth has been welcomed by the California Prune Board (CPB), which represents around 800 growers and handlers from the US state. Esther Ritson-Elliott, the CPB's director of international marketing and communications, said: "Sales of California Prunes have been growing steadily in Europe and other markets over recent years, with the UK market's value more than doubling since 2018.

"The UK, like Germany and Italy, is an important market for California Prunes, with the UK category growing by five per cent in the last year. California Prunes are valued by our UK and European trade partners because of

their size, consistent quality, and premium taste. The California Prune industry is also underpinned by excellence in agricultural methods and advanced inventory management, which enhances our reliability as a trading partner."

The growth trajectory of California Prune exports around the world is set to continue into 2022 as more and more consumers - in part spurred on by the pandemic - seek out natural foods that offer nutritious benefits and versatility in use. Prunes contain a range of vitamins and minerals beneficial for digestive and bone health, as well as nutrients that can play a role in maintaining a normal immune system.

With UK retailers facing continued supply chain disruptions, shelf-stable products are likely to remain popular with consumers. California Prunes can be stored safely in the cupboard for up to a year, and their versatility as both a snack and a sweet and savoury ingredient further boosts their appeal.

Meanwhile, food safety and provenance also remain high on the agenda for

many consumers, as Ritson-Elliott explains: "Our research has revealed that nearly half of international consumers singled out California/USA as the origin they would prefer to buy when shopping for prunes.

"The Californian climate, farming expertise honed from generations of families, and sophisticated harvesting techniques result in consistently premium prunes, making California the world's trusted producer."

She concludes: "California Prunes also benefit from the Board's global marketing programmes, and our investment into everything from sustainable farming methods through to research into the health benefits associated with prunes. When combined with consumer desire for natural, shelf-stable products, we believe the popularity of our prunes will continue to grow into 2022 and beyond."

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