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By Fred Searle

Friday 3rd August 2018, 17:33 GMT

Chilean kiwis move north due to PSA disease



Plantations added in north and removed in south as producers seek out areas less affected by deadly bacteria

Chile is seeing an increase in kiwi plantings in northern regions less affected by the vine disease PSA, the Chilean Kiwifruit Committee has reported.

At present most of the country's kiwi production is focused in the central regions of O'Higgins (the sixth region) and Maule (VII), with around a third of Chile's total kiwi production located in Curicó Province in the Maule region.

General coordinator of the Chilean Kiwifruit Committee, Elizabeth Köhler, said that when high returns prompted a kiwi production boom in Chile in the 1980s some growers planted in areas with less suitable growing conditions.

In the past few years, however, producers have been removing plantations

from less favourable production zones, particularly the Bío-Bío region (VIII), in the southern half of the country.

The main reasons were difficulties with PSA, the age of orchards and growers switching to more lucrative crops, she said, with many exporters only taking fruit from other areas that produce high quality fruit.

Kiwi growers in Chile have been contending with the PSA virus since 2011 when the disease first appeared in the country – one year before that it arrived in two other major kiwi sources: New Zealand and Italy.

The disease, which causes bacterial canker on kiwi vines, has particularly affected Zespri's yellow-fleshed variety Hort16A, costing the New Zealand kiwi industry around \$1 billion since

2010, according to New Zealand biosecurity organisation Kiwifruit Vine Health.

Some producers in Chile have been deterred from planting yellow-fleshed varieties such as Jintao, Dori and Soreli due to the investment risk caused by the disease, however Köhler reported ongoing trials in new yellow varieties in areas north of Curicó Province.

Despite this, the green-fleshed Hayward variety remains Chile's predominant variety, accounting for around 90 per cent of total production.

In a concerted effort to manage the disease, Köhler said her organisation had been teaching producers how to control the bacteria. One important technique is to spray the plants with copper.

<http://www.fruitnet.com/americafruit/article/1474/parts-of-san-diego-quarantined-as-psyllid-count-mounts>

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