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By Maura Maxwell

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Ecuador targets UK & Europe for goldenberry growth



Exporters believe the orange fruit is an attractive addition in the berry category

Ecuaorean goldenberry (physalis) exporters are targeting new opportunities in the UK and European markets. Trade promotion agency ProEcuador said the industry is seeking to position the fruit as a type of berry with "unique flavour, incredible nutrition and versatility".

Ecuador's leading goldenberry suppliers, Terrafertil and Golden Sweet Spirit, currently export to Germany, Spain, France and the Netherlands and are now set for a promotional push in the UK.

"In the last three years, Ecuador has exported US\$87.1m of exotic fruit to the European Union, of which fresh and dried goldenberries accounted for US\$2.2m, including US\$500,000 of dried fruit supplied to the UK," said Juan Carlos Yépez ProEcuador's trade commissioner in the UK.

"We see considerable potential in the UK, as well as opportunities across the EU, for both fresh and dried goldenberries from Ecuador."

ProEcuador hosted five virtual B2B events between May and July this year, during which 26 UK buyers expressed their intention to purchase over US\$1.5m-worth of Ecuadorean fruit, including US\$1.18m of exotics.

Yépez noted that bilateral trade between Ecuador and the UK had strengthened during the coronavirus pandemic.

"From January to May 2020, Ecuador's fruit exports increased by 22 per cent in value to US\$74.7m, and ProEcuador is working hard to ensure this upward growth is maintained throughout 2020," he said.

"Furthermore, this year the Ecuadorean National Assembly and President Lenin

Moreno ratified the trade agreement between Ecuador, Colombia and Peru with the UK, which guarantees trade continuity between Ecuador and the UK."

Golden Sweet Spirit is increasing its goldenberry production area with a view to expanding its export horizons.

General manager Dennis Brito, who is also director of Ecuador's Non-Traditional Fruit Growers' Association, noted: "We wish to create a presence on markets like the UK, where, as a result of Brexit, we expect to launch in the near future.

"Obviously, the pandemic has slowed our expectations but we remain on the right track. Following Fruit Logistica 2020, where Ecuador benefitted from being the Partner Country, we have a lot of potential clients already. We see many opportunities to grow throughout Europe."

According to Yépez, goldenberries offer the perfect balance of sweetness and acidity that is prized by chefs the world over.

“Once consumers try them they are converted into regular buyers, especially those looking for health and wellness foods,” he said.

Brito added: “We are so convinced of the potential for goldenberries to succeed in the berry category that we are going to The Global Berry Congress 2020 to share our story, and to give this super berry with a super taste a well deserved make-over.

Goldenberries are known for their high content of antioxidants, Vitamins

A, B and C, calcium, zinc, potassium, fibre, and iron, according to independent studies.

“This little berry is an incredible nutritional powerhouse, with more antioxidant capacity than apples, goji berries, broccoli and pomegranate juice,” Brito said.

“They’re a wonderful, natural energy booster, with calcium to strengthen your bones, and more Vitamin C than an orange.”

Promotional campaigns will also highlight the fruit’s versatility. Goldenberries can be added to yoghurt, cereal or smoothies for breakfast, eaten as a snack, and used in salads,

salsas, cheese platters, stews, curries or soups. Plus, they are highly regarded within the international gastronomy industry for the exquisite flavour and presentation they bring to desserts.

Ecuador supplies retailers, wholesalers and processors with a range of goldenberry formats, including: fresh fruit, dried fruit, jams and frozen. Supply is year-round by air and sea.