

PRESS RELEASE



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The Chilean fresh fruit industry is assessing the impact of last weekend's earthquake on production areas in southern and central regions of the country.

At this point, it remains too early to deliver a full long-term analysis, but early indications are that large parts of the industry have emerged with minimal damage and the short-term prospects for trade are good.

Chile was woken up on Saturday morning (February 27) by an 8.8 magnitude earthquake in some areas, one of the strongest ever recorded, and its effects were felt throughout much of the country. The epicenter was about 70 miles (116km) off the coast of the southern city of Concepcion, one of Chile's largest cities, and around 270 miles (435km) from the capital, Santiago.

Naturally, the focus of the media's visual and recorded reports has been on areas that experienced the most extensive damage, mainly concentrated in southern and coastal areas. This tends to convey an initial impression that the infrastructure damage is far more extensive than a more measured and balanced approach might report.

The Chilean Exporters Association (ASOEX) is working on confirming reports of damage to some packing sheds, cold storage facilities, transportation links, the ports and airports. Currently the main port of Valparaiso is working to almost full capacity. As a matter of fact, yesterday (Sunday, February 28th), a vessel departed from this port and today a new vessel (Snow Cry) is being loaded. The San Antonio Port is currently under evaluation, whereas the Port of Coquimbo is working normally.

Ronald Bown, Chairman of the Board of ASOEX, said: “Although it’s too early to measure the likely mid - long-term impact of the earthquake on fruit supplies for export, initial reports are encouraging. A number of the key packing facilities escaped with minimal damage and where roads and bridges are impassible, alternate routes are available”

He added: “Because Chile has moved to the peak of the harvest season, a substantial volume of fruit is on the water headed for international ports. We do not anticipate major disruption in fruit supplies.”

Chile is well prepared for these types of seismic events and growers and exporters will continue to make every effort to meet previously established shipping goals.

The Chilean Exporters Association (ASOEX) is working on a complete diagnosis of the situation and updates will be posted on the www.chileanfreshfruit.com website in an effort to keep receivers / importers and trade colleagues posted on any currently unanticipated disruptions in supply of particular species.

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Notes to Editors: The Chilean Exporters Association (ASOEX) is a non profit private entity, founded in 1935, which represents Chile’s fresh fruit exporting industry. Its members represent over 90% of the total volume of fresh fruit exported from Chile.