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Chile: Fruit Crop Loss Estimates

by Barbara Khol

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According to Ricardo Ariztia, president of the national fruit growers' association (FEDEFruta), and Agriculture Minister Juan Agustin Figueroa, the Oct. 16-18 cold snap caused a 10% to 15% loss in the 1991/92 fruit harvest. Nevertheless, both say the harvest will surpass the 1990/91 yield of 128 million boxes. Other sources assert that losses range from 20% to 30%. For instance, Gerardo Arteaga, fruit specialist for Chile's National Agriculture Society (SNA), said the nation's most productive fruit-growing regions were the hardest hit by excess rain combined with snow, hail and extremely low temperatures. Preliminary estimates by David Del Curto, of Chile's largest fruit export company, indicate that up to 30 million boxes of fruit of a total original estimated 145 million were lost in the cold snap. The company's expected sales for the current season have declined from 16.5 million to 13.5 million boxes. According to Del Curto estimates, 16% of table grape production has been lost; 48%, kiwis; 45%, cherries; 83%, apricots; 18%, pears; 7%, plums; 10%, nectarines; 7%, peaches; and, 15%, red apples. The SNA's Arteaga said expected losses mainly table grapes in the Los Andes and San Felipe areas average 10%. In the northern metropolitan area which includes Colina and Quilicura, damage was described as "very serious," with up to a total loss of table grapes and kiwis. Damage estimates approached 100% in the Macul area as well. South of Santiago San Bernardo, Calera de Tango, Buin and Paine losses range from 20% to 40%. Most affected were table grapes, kiwis, plums, corn and potatoes. In Region VI, which includes the Rancagua area, growers reported total loss of several fruit crops, including table grapes, kiwis and cherries. In addition to damage caused by the cold snap, abundant rain has increased the likelihood of fungus disease. About 500,000 people are employed in Chile's fruit production sector. [Basic data from Chilean Information Project (CHIP, Santiago), 10/23/91]

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