

Panel 3 Foreign trade to dismantle non-tariff barriers, challenges in the next twenty years

Questions received by attending audience and answers issued by Mr. Hector Echeverria

What are the changes in purchasing patterns of organic products and their traceability in Chile?

As a result of the pandemic, consumers turned to online shopping as their preferred way to acquire different products, as it happened in many parts of the world. Traditionally, marketing points for organic products are located in supermarkets and retail, specialized stores, fairs and other forms of short commercialization circuits (basket, retail), in addition to hotels and restaurants. We can say that at national level there could be up to 1,000 points of sale, but after closing due to the pandemic these migrated to electronic platforms.

Chile has a National Certification System for Organic Agricultural Products that is monitored by its Agricultural and Livestock Service (SAG, in Spanish). There, the conditions for product commercialization were established under the organic designation or its equivalents. Products registered there are certified by an entity listed in the Registry of the National Organic Certification System.

How did you prove that cherries do not cause COVID?

This story started up as a rumor on social networks that affected commercialization with China. Two days after learning of this, the Chilean Association of Fresh Fruit Exporters (Asoex), together with Chile's Federation of Fruit Producers, issued a statement detailing the security measures adopted by our Industry during this pandemic. Worthy of note is that this statement quoted the expert Wu Zunyou, chief epidemiologist of the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, who explained that a positive nucleic acid test (the same one performed on cherries) does not necessarily mean that it is infectious. The infection caused by contamination must be in a relatively large amount and requires long-term recurring contact. The infection risk from consuming food imported on a cold chain is very low, according to the Chinese expert.

Unlike cold chain shipments that typically store food at sub-zero temperatures, fresh fruit shipments are typically at 4-6 degrees and pose significantly lower COVID-19 risks. Therefore, the risk in cherries is extremely low.

To ensure international trade of agro-alimentary products, both imports and exports, and subject to the Verification at Origin Program, how many verification and inspection points does Chile have? Where is it performed? At authorized points of entry, or at some final internal destinations?

Just like Mexico, the number of verification points is defined depending on commercial import and export flows for SAC

monitoring. For example, in the Metropolitan Region it is located at the Arturo Merino Benítez Airport; while in the Valparaíso Region we have the Cristo Redentor International Passage, San Antonio Port, Valparaíso Port and Puerto Ventanas Port. These are authorized entry points.

How have animal health campaigns been carried out for controlling and eradicating brucellosis and bovine tuberculosis? And what percentage in Chile is free of bovine tuberculosis and brucellosis for exporting bovine meat abroad?

SAG has very successful programs regarding the eradication of these diseases, since it is very important for our country to maintain the ideal conditions to improve our access to other international markets. The results of actions being carried out are published periodically. We invite you to directly go to the information sources in these two links:

What would be your opinion on phytosanitary and biosafety precision safeguards, both at origin and at points of entry?

Chile has different biosafety measures that are monitored jointly by the private sector and SAG, and thanks to this we are able act immediately and effectively in unfavorable scenarios. We have an early detection system that gives peace of mind to our business partners. In my opinion, these are very valuable actions that keep us participating in the most demanding markets in the world.

Is this electronic certification already taking place in your country? And what happens in regions that lack this Service?

The Certification is enabled by markets and is very much in tune with the existing IT Services. The conditions are given to establish this bilateral communication, but there are issues that we are addressing to consolidate the process. As for Mexico and agricultural products, we have obtained very good results that give us confidence to pass on this experience related to livestock matters. Markets must understand that this is the future of international trade and we are one step away from achieving it.

Do you have in mind or have plans to create equivalence schemes or procedures in Phytozoosanitary matters that provide greater certainty and agility in the flow of products from the agricultural sector?

We believe that over the years Chile has become a trusted partner for Mexico. We are transparent in the flow of health information and we fully comply with the standards that Mexico sets for us to access its market; in addition, we have not had events that compromise Mexico's health condition. In this relationship that has already matured, we do not rule out the possibility that this trust can be transformed into equivalence schemes that help us make bilateral trade more fluid.