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Spanish soft fruit production increases and consolidates as an alternative to strawberry

Report Categories:

Strawberries

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Report Highlights:

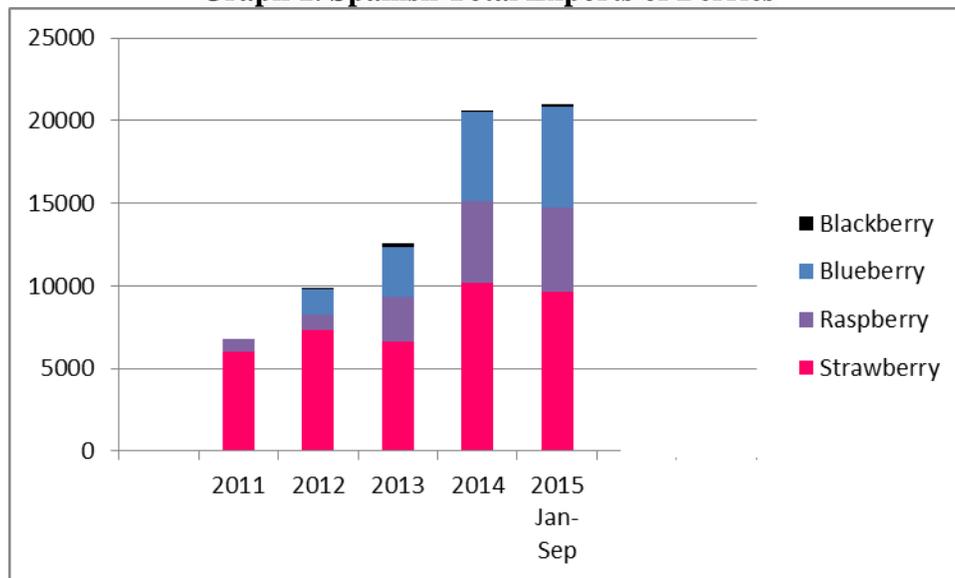
Berry production, especially blackberries, blueberries and raspberries, in recent years has shifted from an alternative production to an important cash crop for Spanish farmers. In the last five years Spanish farmers have embraced berries as the best way to diversify their activity and minimizing the risks related with the strawberry monoculture and the highest competition compared to the rest of soft fruits. At present, there is an increasing demand for soft fruits in Spain, within the EU and in third countries. Farmers in Huelva, Andalusia, the main Spanish region for strawberry production are increasing the planted area for blackberries, blueberries and raspberries

General Information:

Berry production, especially blackberries, blueberries and raspberries, in recent years has shifted from an alternative production to an important cash crop for Spanish farmers. In the last five years Spanish farmers have embraced berries as the best way to diversify their activity and minimizing the risks related with the strawberry monoculture and the highest competition compared to the rest of soft fruits. We see an increasing demand for soft fruits in Spain, within the EU and in third countries. This change is seen in the main Spanish region for strawberry production, Huelva in Andalusia, where strawberry farmers are opening new markets and business lines designed to achieve greater profitability to its business. Farmers in Huelva are increasing the planted area for blackberries, blueberries and raspberries.

According to FEPEX, the Spanish federation of associations of producers and exporters of fruits and vegetables, berry exports in the last 6 years shows this upward trend (Graph 1) to the EU 28 but especially important to third countries.

Graph 1. Spanish Total Exports of Berries



Source: FAS Madrid with FEPEX data

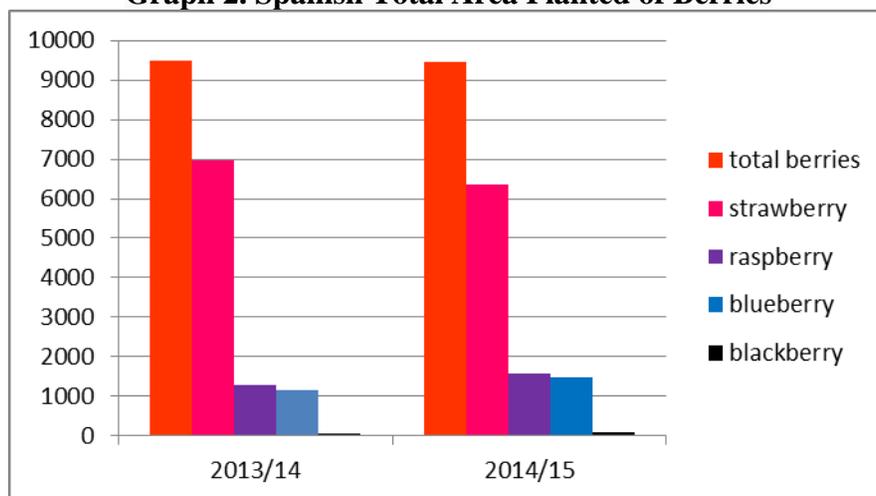
Considering that the province of Huelva is mainly the only berry producer in Spain, the data relating to Andalusia is clear. In blueberries, Andalusia produced in 2013 a total volume of 14,724 MT (96.77% of the total Spanish blueberry production); blueberries that experienced the highest growth considering that in 2008 the blueberry production was 3,124 MT.

The second berry product that has shown the most growth in the last six years has been the raspberry, which rose from 12,303 MT in 2008 to 17,369 MT in 2013, with 91.34% of the total Spanish raspberry production again in Huelva, Andalusia. Finally, blackberries increased its production from 405 MT in 2008 to 1625 MT in 2013, being the Andalusian blackberry production the 54.22% of the total Spanish blackberry production.

Despite all this growth in alternative berries and the overall decline in the strawberry harvested area, strawberries remains the main soft fruit produced in Spain. According to FEPEX, the strawberry production in 2008 was 189,741 MT passing to 317,700 MT in 2015. Andalusian strawberry production is certainly the main Spanish producer with Huelva accounting for 97% of the total Spanish strawberry production. Huelva located in the south western of Spain, has a strategic position as it is influenced by the Atlantic climate, with exceptional climatic features allowing being the first European berries to the market.

FresHuelva, the Association of strawberry producers and exporters in Huelva calculates a decrease of 9.2% the strawberry area planted with an increase of 25 % the planted area dedicated to other berries. The total area for soft fruits during last campaign 2014/2015 was 9,460 ha compared to 9,500 ha of the previous year (Graph 2). The area planted for strawberry was of 6,980 ha during 2013/2014 and of 6,340 ha during 2014/2015 or 9 % decrease, while the area planted for the rest of berries was of 2,520 in 2013/2014 and of 3,120 ha in 2014/2015.

Graph 2. Spanish Total Area Planted of Berries



Source: FAS Madrid with FresHuelva Data

The area planted for raspberry during 2014/15 was of 1,560 ha compared to the 1,300 ha planted in the previous season, or 20 % increase. For blueberry, the area planted during 2014/15 was of 1,470 ha compared to the 1,150 ha planted in the previous season, or 27.8 % increase. Blackberry experienced the greatest growth with 28.6 % with 90 ha in 2014/15 compared to the 70 ha planted in the previous season.

As a result of the increasing demand for soft fruits and the importance that these types of crops have acquired in recent years, in June 2015 Huelva held the [First Congress of Berries](#) with the plan to hold a Congress every year to focus on national and international issues. In recent years several U.S. berry companies have invested and installed offices in Huelva, both due to special climate conditions and the strategic point to reach Spain, EU, Africa and the Middle Eastern markets.