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Chile

Onions

1999

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Report Highlights:

Includes PSD changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
Santiago [CI9037], Chile

Table of Contents

Production	Page 2
Table - Chile: Onion Planted Area and Production	Page 3
Consumption	Page 3
Prices	Page 3
Table - Chile: Onion Real Domestic Prices	Page 4
Trade	Page 5
Table - Chile: Onion Exports by Destination	Page 5

Production

In spite of a significant fall in average domestic prices together with a drought which has affected most crops in the Metropolitan and Fifth Regions total planted area to onions for this season has grown significantly. Production which is mostly for domestic consumption is expected to grow more next season according to industry analysts. As a result of large yearly variations of the number of onion growers, production volumes and prices in Chile exhibit large variations over time.

Chile's onion production can be grouped into three different types of onions according to the planting and harvesting time:

Early onions: seedbeds are planted in Jan.- Feb. of each year, and replanted out in the fields in late March and April. Under normal conditions these onions are harvested in September - October, but when there is a shortage and market prices are high these onions could get to the market earlier in immature stages (chive).

Medium season onions: seedbeds are planted in March - April and replanted in fields in June. They mature and are harvested in December. Most export varieties are of this type like the new sweet varieties, which have shown an increase in planted area, production and exports during the last few years.

Storable onions: Seedbeds are planted in June and replanted in the fields during August. These onions mature and are harvested in January, February and March. Over 60 percent of total yearly planted area to onions are of this type of onion.

TABLE - CHILE: ONION PLANTED AREA AND PRODUCTION				
Production Years	Area Planted (Ha)	Production (MT)	Exports (MT)	Imports (MT)
1990	8,451	239,450	57,117	n/I
1,991	9,042	271,260	71,757	n/I
1,992	7,481	224,430	19,134	n/I
1,993	8,307	249,210	24,554	n/I
1,994	9,233	305,000	53,148	0
1,995	9,000	295,000	82,411	3,456
1,996	10,756	398,580	43,368	0
1,997	5,420	197,722	24,345	3,027
1,998	6,017	235,872	23,888	1,393
1999 *	6,700	262,646	24,000	0
2000 **	7,200	282,250	25,000	0
Note: * preliminary.				
** projections.				

Consumption

Over 70 percent of total onion production is consumed domestically. As a result of a smaller planted area and production of onions and a strong export demand, onions were imported from Argentina to cover supply shortages during short periods of time.

Prices

Domestic prices for onions show large monthly and yearly variations.

TABLE - CHILE: ONION REAL DOMESTIC PRICES (In June 1999 Pesos per 100 Units)		
	1998	1999
January	4,522	1,045
February	4,322	1,071
March	4,122	958
April	4,304	700
May	4,558	630
June	4,967	595
July	4,629	
August	4,247	
September	4,435	
October	3,249	
November	2,413	
December	1,477	
Average	4,466	833
Source: National Institute of Statistics.		
Exchange Rate: US\$1.00 = CH\$515.		

Trade

Onions are produced mainly for the domestic demand. Constant changes in foreign demand for onions makes Chile's onion exports vary from year to year.

TABLE - CHILE: ONION EXPORTS BY DESTINATION (In MT)			
	1996	1997	1998
U.K.	18,568	6,046	9,826
Netherlands	8,479	3,097	4,043
Colombia	579	648	2,911
U.S.	6,710	3,791	2,019
Panama	47	100	1,668
Spain	1,597	282	708
Germany	2,013	473	543
Cuba	394	199	399
Russia	0	0	299
Ecuador	198	0	252
Japan	1,349	50	251
Costa Rica	263	0	200
Brazil	1,486	6,956	193
France	0	0	150
Uruguay	631	738	118
Ireland	51	0	97
Venezuela	0	0	50
Argentina	15	1,838	50
Bolivia	61	38	42
Honduras	0	0	23
Guyana	0	15	21
Peru	0	0	13
Haiti	0	0	11

Other	929	74	0
TOTAL	43,368	24,345	23,888
Source: Central Bank.			