

Strawberry Production in South America

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This paper describes the strawberry industry in South America. Strawberries are produced in a number of South American countries for fresh market, however there is with a modest amount of fresh and frozen fruit exported to Europe and USA. The estimated annual area for strawberry planting in South America is about 11,884 hectares and fruit production is 318,686 metric tons. Argentina, Chile and Brazil are the most important strawberry producers in South America. Specialized nursery industries in Argentina and Chile supply plants to nearly all countries in South America. Most of these nurseries are producing North American cultivars under intellectual property right agreements. Brazilian strawberry growers plant about 175×10^6 fresh-dug plants annually, with 15% being imported from Chile and Argentina, and the remaining transplants produced by local nurseries (65%) or by individual growers (20%). Brazilian growers buy mother plants from tissue culture laboratories and cultivate them themselves directly in the open field. The plants obtained from the runners are planted by the strawberry growers to produce fruit. The mother plants are planted in September and October (spring) and the runners are harvested in March and April (early autumn), when they are shipped and planted to begin production in May. The regions with low temperatures during the summer are suited for nursery plant production, but in Brazil those locations are limited to small areas at 800 m elevation or more. Brazilian consumers use quality criteria such as appearance, color, size, weight and freshness when buying strawberries. Different from other fruits, Brazilian strawberries are not identified as to cultivar name in the supermarket which leaves consumers confused when choosing the product. The cultivar Dover was the main variety cultivated in the 1990s, but the introduction of new cultivars with high quality (sweeter and tastier) resulted in important changes in the production chain. The main cultivars now are 'Oso Grande' (50%), 'Camarosa' (30%), 'Albion' (6%), 'Aromas' (4%), and other cultivars (10%) as 'Festival', 'Camino Real', 'Portola', 'Monterey' and 'San Andreas'.

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