

Brazilian Juice Producers Learn to Get the Right Taste for Export

Contributed by Cláudia Abreu
Friday, 10 June 2005

Brazilian mangoes, pineapple, paw-paw and grapes have found a fertile territory in the Arab market. This is the conclusion of a trade mission that the Brazilian Fruit Institute (Ibraf) recently took to four countries in the region: Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Lebanon.

To Moacyr Saraiva, the institute president, the visit served to show that the Arab market "is promising and should be in the agenda of the fruit sector, especially of companies that want to increase their exports."

Saraiva explained that the mission, which lasted eight days and ended on the 4th of June, served to learn a little more about the consumer market, to identify fruit export trade hurdles and demands and to keep in close contact with trade representatives in that region.

According to him, the good news is that the image of Brazilian products is very good among the Arab countries and the barriers are not large.

"Tariffs are low in most of the countries. With regard to food safety, they are as demanding as the Europeans. On the other hand, they are not as demanding with regard to the visual presentation of the fruit," he said.

The trade mission took place soon after Saudi Food, a fair that was held in May, in Saudi Arabia. Four Brazilian companies participated in the event.

Atlântica Internacional, Renar Maçãs, Amacoco and Café Canecão received the support of the Ibraf and of the Brazilian Export Promotion Agency (Apex) to go to the show.

Atlântica, from the southeastern Brazilian state of São Paulo, is already counting the gains from the visits to the Arabs this year - in February, company representatives also travelled to the United Arab Emirates.

Next week, the company is going to ship 100 tons of mango juice to Dubai. This is the first time that Atlântica sells to the Emirates, despite already having exported to some countries in the region, like Lebanon, Syria and Jordan.

According to Vlamir Breternitz, the company director, mango juice is very much consumed in the region, losing only to orange juice.

"The acceptance is good, but we have to make slight adaptations to the flavor and to the formulation," he said.

The idea is to make the Brazilian product similar to the Indian, very much exported to the Arabs. Indian mangos are different from the kind produced in Brazil.

However, competition with the Indians should not take place all the time, as the crops take place at different times. In Brazil, mangos are harvested from November to February.

"When the crop finishes here, it begins there, and it is during this interval in supply that the Brazilian product may enter the Arab market," stated Breternitz.

The company also bets on the export of pineapple juice to the Arabs. This drink also competes with the Indian product. The flavour, as is the case with mango, is different. Brazilian pineapple is sweeter.

Another advantage: it is cultivated all year round; there is no hiatus in the crop. "When we told this to the Arabs, they were intrigued, and stated that they wanted to visit our plantations, to see how we can produce all year round," stated Breternitz.

The products made by Atlântica are exported in antiseptic bags in 200-kilogram drums. Depending on the formulation, it is possible to make between 400 and 2,000 liters of ready to drink juice with this volume.

Atlântica represents five companies that make concentrated fruit juice in São Paulo and in the northern Brazilian state of Pará.

Together, they produce a yearly total of 5,000 tons of oranges, 4,000 of pineapple, 3,000 of mango and 2,500 of guava.

Apples

Producers of raw fruit are also eyeing the Arab market. Renar Maçãs, from the southern state of Santa Catarina, participated in the Saudi Food fair for the second time.

"We are studying the Arab market, observing their habits and changing business cards with local businessmen," stated Roland Brandes, the company president and director.

According to him, the Arab market is interesting, as it "does not have restrictions to Brazilian products."

The company has already made some contacts with the Arabs, but always through European and American companies.

"Our intention is to do business directly with the region," stated Brandes. Renar produces around 40,000 tons of fruit a year, half being exported. The countries in the European Union are the main buyers.

Last year, Brazil exported 850,000 tons of fresh fruit. The Arab countries imported only 2,280 tons from Brazil, a drop of 48.35% when compared to 2003.

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