

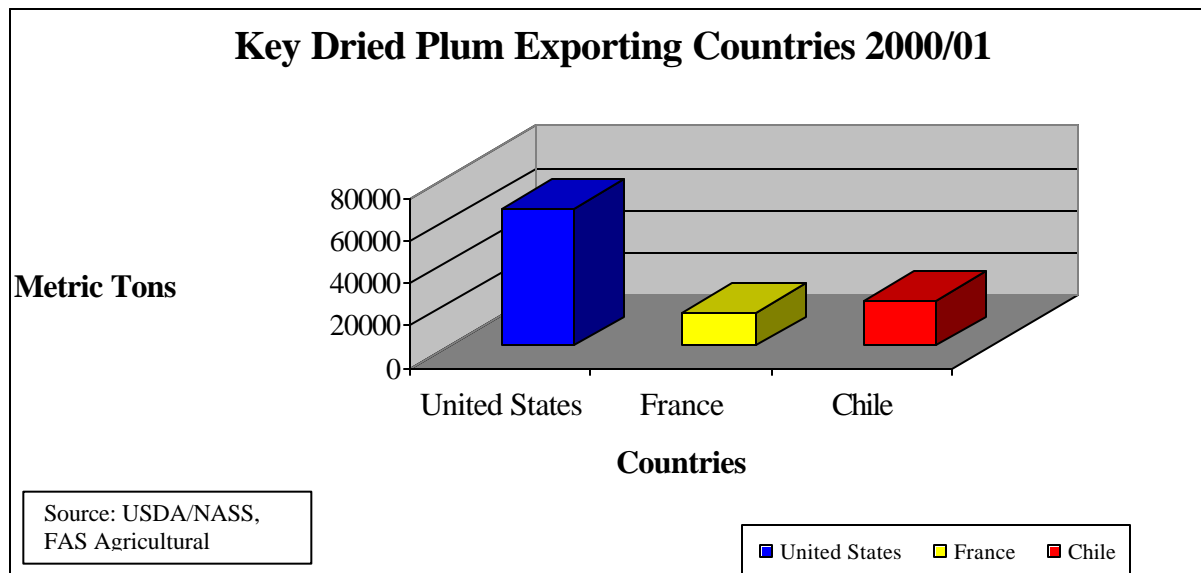
## Dried Fruit (Dried Plum -Prune) Situation in Selected Countries

Total dried plum production for 2001/02 for selected countries is forecast at 191,656 tons, down 27 percent from the previous year. Dried plum production is expected to be at normal levels in France and Chile, while production in the United States is anticipated to be smaller as a result of production limitation programs. Dried plum exports are expected to fall by 5 percent as a result of smaller crops and flat international demand.

### GLOBAL PRODUCTION & TRADE

The United States, France and Chile are the world's key dried plum producers. Combined, these countries are expected to generate more than 199,656 tons of dried plums in 2001/02.

These countries also are the world's largest exporters of dried plums. Chile exports approximately 90 percent of its production, the United States 46 percent and France 29 percent.



### United States

The 2001/02 dried plum crop is forecast at 120,656 tons, a 66-percent decrease from last year's record crop. This smaller crop is supplemented by a carry-in of 101,000 tons from the previous year. The industry's longer-term outlook shows significantly larger supplies of dried plums as a result of increased planting of the early 1990s. In anticipation of the increased supplies, the industry implemented an USDA-funded \$17 million tree removal program in January 2002 to help stabilize production levels.

As a result of the larger crop, total U.S. dried plum exports in 2000/01 increased by more than 26 percent from the preceding year to 81,942 tons. Exports in 2001/02 are down 8 percent from 2000/01 between August 2001 and March 2002. To date, exports to the industry's largest export markets (Germany and Japan) are down a combined 24 percent. Shipments to Poland, on the other hand, are up 118 percent to 1,107 tons.

The California dried plum industry, represented by the California Dried Plum Board, exports 46 percent of its production to more than 50 markets. Market Access Program funds are used to market dried plums in Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy and China/Hong Kong. Japan and the European markets comprise about 60 percent of total export sales. Stiff competition from subsidized French dried plum producers/growers, as well as increased U.S. production, make for a challenging time for the U.S. prune industry.

## **France**

France, the United States largest competitor, typically accounts for 15 to 20 percent of the world's dried plum production and competes with the U.S. industry in all the major EU export markets. Dried plum production is expected to return to normal levels after several years of underproduction. In MY 2001/02, dried plum production is forecast at 56,000 tons, a 27-percent increase from the previous year. To date, weather conditions have been favorable resulting in expectations that next year's crop will be at the same levels as the current year.

After the 1996 crisis of prune overproduction, French prune growers organized a production limitation system, similar to a pull-out program. Since 1997, harvests have been considerably lower, except in 2001, and French prune growers are currently organizing a planting program with a goal of 300 hectares planted per year for two years. This was decided by the entire prune industry, including the producers (97 percent of registered growers organizations), the processors and the traders. The objective was to stabilize the orchards at a level of 14,500 hectares.

The French Prune Producers' Board funds promotional activities in the United Kingdom, Netherlands, Germany, Italy and Spain. Traditionally, the EU Commission has set new minimum grower prices and a subsidy for prune processors. The processors pay this price to producers and are subsequently reimbursed with a subsidy from the EU. This subsidy conveys a significant advantage to French exporters in exporting throughout the European Union. In 2001/02, dried plum exports are expected to reach 16,000 tons.

Dried plums produced domestically are either consumed directly or are processed into food products like juice or ingredients for cookies and yogurts. During the 2000/01 marketing year, about 2,500 tons of prunes were processed into 5,455 tons of processed products.

## **Chile**

The 2001 (January-December) crop is estimated to remain unchanged from the previous year at 22,500 tons, as a result of good weather conditions. Dried plum production in 2002 is forecast slightly larger, up to 23,000 tons, due to an increase in planted/harvested areas. Chile harvests plums from mid-February through mid-April, entirely by hand. This greatly enhances quality

since the fruit is picked at peak ripeness and maturity. Dried plums are mainly sun-dried, although there are also some drying tunnels.

Chile's dried plum exports are estimated to slightly increase in 2001, up 8 percent from the previous year. Exports are forecast to increase in 2002 due to a larger crop. Chilean dried plums are ready for shipment from the end of April through November. Latin America remains Chile's main dried plum customer. No significant changes are expected in the coming years. Three exporters account for nearly 70 percent of total export volume. Mexico, Brazil, Spain, Germany and Peru are leading export markets.

*(The FAS Attache Report search engine contains reports on the Dried Fruit industries for 8 countries, including South Africa, Turkey and Australia. For information on production and trade, contact Rey Santella at 202-720-0897. For information on marketing contact Ingrid Mohn at 202-720-5330)*