

# Quality production of raspberries and blueberries in Morocco

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Although the first trials of berry cultivation in Morocco date back to the early 1990s, the effective start of this crop was in 2004. Since then, Moroccan exports of fresh raspberries and blueberries have increased gradually, making Morocco one of the world's leading exporters of these two products. Agricultural production goes through certain necessary stages to obtain a good quality product, capable of satisfying the normative requirements and those of importers. The production site must meet certain key conditions regarding soil suitability, water availability and quality, sunlight, and exposure to winds. Once the site is suitable, preparation operations for on-ground crops can begin, namely: addition of manure and compost, pH correction, if necessary, plowing, and disinfection of the soil against nematodes. The dimensioning of the ridges must take into consideration certain elements such as the width of the tunnel, the species to be planted, the size of the root and vegetative systems of the plants. Planting can then begin according to a well thought-out calendar that takes into consideration, essentially, the type of plant material, the behaviour of the plants and the desired periods of entry into production. The cultivation of berries requires permanent and meticulous maintenance, i.e. trellising to support the plants, balanced and reasoned feeding with organic manure and different types of fertilisers, continuous monitoring of the sanitary state of the plants, integrated pest and disease control and efficient pollination. Once the fruit is ripe, selective harvesting can then begin, giving priority to berries that are ripe and of adequate quality. After harvesting, the fruit must be transported as soon as possible to the packhouses for packing and cooling; the longer the fruit stay at the farm, the shorter is the shelf life.

Before exporting, Moroccofoodex inspectors carry out quality inspections to ensure that the product meets the requirements of the UNECE standard FFV 57, namely minimum requirements, maturity requirements, classification, homogeneity, presentation and labelling. This inspection is based on an internal interpretation of the requirements of the standard, reinforced by photos, illustrating unacceptable defects. The quality of the finished product certainly starts on the farm.