

Spain: Lemon harvest prospects reduced to 860,000 tonnes

According to the Lemon and Grapefruit Interprofessional Association (AILIMPO), the Spanish lemon campaign has been positive up until January, despite a rocky start caused by excess heat and smaller calibres.

"These problems were already sorted and I believe we can rate the Fino lemon campaign as successful, with moderately good prospects. Prices have been quite satisfactory for growers and the industry is processing larger volumes than usual. Exports are going well, as there were no accumulated stocks in Argentina or South Africa and the Spanish produce has dominated," explains José Antonio García, director of AILIMPO.

As for production volumes, of the 910,000 tonnes originally expected, it appears only 860,000 tonnes will be harvested. "We have reduced our prospects for September's harvest due to issues with calibres," states José Antonio García. Of that total, around 130,000 tonnes will be distributed in the domestic market, while approximately 500,000 tonnes will be exported and between 220,000 and 240,000 will go to the processing industry.

93% of those exports will be shipped to the EU, with Germany as the main destination, followed by France and the UK. Outside the EU, there is a long list of clients in countries such as Switzerland, Algeria, Brazil, Hong Kong or Canada, although these are much smaller volumes.

The main production areas in Spain are Murcia (40%) and Alicante (35%); the remaining 25% is supplied by Almeria and Malaga.

Regarding prices, José Antonio García says that "they have been significantly higher than the production costs during the past two campaigns. Fino lemons stand at 0.27 to 0.30 Euro/kilo at origin, with production costs of between 0.17 and 0.19 Euro/kilo. We have found some stability and we hope everything continues this way."

The situation, however, is not as good for grapefruit, with negative results and low levels of demand. While Spain dominates the lemon market, the country is a very small grapefruit supplier, standing behind producers such as Israel, Turkey and Florida. Spain expects to harvest 52,000 tonnes this season.

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