

Leaf-mining' moth threatens Turkish tomatoes

A harmful leaf-eating moth is threatening tomato production in the southern province of Antalya, raising concerns over the product's price during the summer as Anadolu agency reports.

Sector representatives say the "Tuta absoluta," also known as a tomato leafminer, has reappeared in the region, four years after causing damage to tomato fields. If authorities and farmers fail to establish an efficient plan to tackle the problem, the price of field-grown tomatoes, which are normally cheaper in the summer season, will not drop due to a lack in supply, according to officials.

The Antalya Commodity Exchange (ATB) has already organized a meeting to decide on a tactic to combat the insect in order to avoid further losses. Speaking at the meeting, a prominent agricultural health official in Antalya said that around one-third of the 2.3 million tomatoes produced in the province were under threat.

Mehmet Sen, an official at the Plant and Quarantine Department at the Antalya Provincial Directorate of Agriculture, warned that 100% of the crops were at risk if the necessary steps were not taken. He said the tomato prices in the market, which normally fall in the summer season, would remain at winter levels.

Meanwhile, Ekrem Cetin, also of the Antalya Provincial Directorate of Agriculture, said the tuta absoluta would also hamper Turkey's export market. He said countries, including Russia and Ukraine, have intensified their examination of Turkish tomatoes as they are aware of the risk involving moths. He added that domestic consumers, particularly in Istanbul, also do not want to consume affected products. Sen said the moth that came to Turkey from Southern Europe first arrived in the country back in 2009.

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