

Spain: Great lemon production, low sales

The Unió de Llauradors (Growers Association) has stated that the unusual weather in recent months (high temperatures and lack of rain) has caused delays in the ripening of citrus fruits in Alicante, especially lemons. For this reason, according to José Manuel Pamies, head of the Association's citrus department in Alicante, "the current campaign is marked by the low number of marketing transactions."

The lack of rainfall and the high temperatures in recent months prevented "lemons from reaching the desired calibres until it started raining, and everything has been delayed." At the moment, the campaign has come to a halt: "There is neither harvest nor export, since, apparently, the market still has sufficient stocks," explains Pamies.

Nevertheless, the lemons have reached an "exceptional" quality. "Right now there's a lot of Fino, which this year has overlapped with another early variety that has been delayed, and not everything can be shipped at once." As a result, growers "are nervous and worried" because "many tonnes of lemons have accumulated and sales are still low, and the few transactions carried out are done at really low prices and it's not worth it." José Manuel Pamies believes that "we are going through a difficult time, but it is important not to despair and wait and see how the market will react after the holidays."

To this we must add another factor, Spanish growers' position of disadvantage compared to Turkey. This is a country with a high rate of lemon consumption, "but which does not produce enough to supply its entire population and cover the demand from tourism during the spring and summer," says Pamies. For this reason, they usually purchase Spanish lemons. The problem is that they "set really high import tariffs, of 54%, which increases our costs to an enormous extent." Furthermore, "the Turkish government subsidises lemon growers covertly with about \$ 120 per tonne, making it very difficult to compete."

Given this situation, La Unió "has issued many complaints to the European Union, urging it to seek a solution, but we have never received an answer about it." The Unió considers it necessary "for the EU to intervene and put an end to the advantages Turkey enjoys."

Meanwhile, "lemons have also been left out of the aid programme for product withdrawal, introduced because of the Russian veto, which has entailed numerous problems for Alicante's growers."

Spain is internationally known for its citrus, "of which 260 million tonnes are harvested in Valencia, and more than 90% in Alicante, with 12,000 hectares in the Vega Baja alone." This is an essential product "as approximately 12,000 families depend on the crop, both directly and indirectly."

Source : <http://www.freshplaza.com/24/12/2014>