

Spain: IVIA launches new mandarin varieties

Three new mandarin varieties will expand the increasingly extensive range available for the second half of the citrus season, which starts in January; three triploid hybrids obtained and selected by the Valencian Institute of Agricultural Research (IVIA). They are called Alborea, Coral and Tri-5. The latter is still known by its technical name because the name originally proposed, Amber, was already registered as a trademark.

It is still not entirely sure that all three will become available for the citrus sector. The IVIA is currently conducting a round of introductions to find out how professionals rate each one of them.

As explained by Luis Navarro and Pablo Aleza, of the IVIA's Department of Biotechnology, the centre and the Agroalimed Foundation will decide on the matter on the basis of the assessments collected from growers and marketers, because they want to have plenty of information to ensure that anything done has been previously approved.

There is, however, some interest in accelerating the release process of new varieties by IVIA, since researchers and policy makers in the Ministry are constantly under pressure in this regard.

Testing in several locations

There seems to be a change in attitude at IVIA's research centre, which is starting to favour accelerating the introduction of new varieties in the fields and not spending years and years in analyses and checks that delay the process.

This change in strategy will bring the testing of each citrus variety selected simultaneously to different parts of the country; this way, in just a few years it will be possible to conclude which ones are better or worse, as well as what soil conditions and climate work (or not) for each of them. Eventually there is a final test, as we are currently seeing with the Safor and Garbí, other mandarin varieties developed by the IVIA, which have achieved average results in some cases, but excellent in others.

Three new options

The Alborea is a triploid hybrid, a "son" of the Fortune and Wilking mandarins. It is a tree of medium vigour and open growth, with good compatibility with the usual patterns. The fruits are bright red, easy peeling and have great organoleptic qualities; they are more like clementines than tangelos. Ripening and harvest from mid-December to early February. It would make it possible to extend the Clemenules campaign. It is resistant to alternaria; no traces of the fungus have been found even after forced inoculations. It doesn't present any physiopathies either, nor does it produce seeds or causes them to appear in other varieties.

Coral and Tri-5 are "daughters" of Fortune and common mandarins, from which they have inherited their characteristic aroma. Ripening in January-February, somewhat after the Alborea. They also have great organoleptic qualities, but are relatively

susceptible to Alternaria, as a result of which they should be grown by more specialised growers or at locations where this problem is not an issue.

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