

## Spain: Citrus harvest down 20%

The high temperatures recorded in May, June and July and, to a lesser extent, the reduction of the number of hectares devoted to the production of citrus in Valencia, will result in a 2015/16 orange, mandarin, grapefruit and lemon campaign with around 20% lower volumes than those recorded last year.

The regional estimates early in the season were down by 22.3% (3.05 million tonnes) in Valencia, by 11.2% (1.73 million tonnes) in Andalusia, by 23.4% (722,758 tonnes) in Murcia and by 5.83% (35,392 tonnes of oranges and lemons) in Catalonia.

The Andalusian Councillor of Agriculture, Carmen Ortiz, recently announced that Spain's total citrus production in the 2015/16 campaign would amount to about 5.7 million tonnes (-19.2%).

The regional surveys conducted in July and August reflect a commitment to these crops in Andalusia (85,000 hectares), with new varieties, as well as reductions in Valencia (by 162,000 hectares, -2.02%, due to abandonment or conversion to kakis or pomegranates) and Catalonia.

The deputy general manager of Anecoop, Paco Borrás, described the decline in the harvest as "within normal limits" and confirmed "an improvement in the quality of the fruit." The cooperative is consequently confident that "this citrus campaign will be better than those of the last three years." Anecoop accounts for about 30% of the total domestic revenue, 217.6 million Euro in 2014, and produces citrus in Valencia, Seville, Murcia and Almeria.

For Borrás, this campaign could bring the "recovery of varieties like the Navelina and Clemenules" and has "good prospects" for sales in Europe now that "we have found alternatives to the Russian market, with new overseas markets that we believe are here to stay."

The head of the citrus sector at the agricultural organization Asaja, Cristóbal Aguado, believes that the extraordinary heat at the time of the setting of oranges and tangerines has been the main cause for the reduction in the harvest volume of extra-early varieties.

Aguado has confirmed that this decline has resulted in "commercial operators accumulating stocks," as well as in an increase in the number of signed contracts for extra-early clementine varieties "of between 10 and 15%" compared to last year.

The head for fruits and vegetables at COAG, Andrés Góngora, noted that "the outcome of the campaign remains to be seen," since current projections may improve if the weather conditions are not adverse, as has been the case with the record rains registered in September, coinciding with the fruit's ripening.

The head of UPA for citrus, Rafael Cervera, stressed that this citrus campaign "will yield enough fruit, but not excessive volumes." He recalled that Spain exports an

average of 4.6 million tonnes per season, devotes another million kilos to juicing and domestic consumption amounts to about 600,000 tonnes.

In Spain "the yield per hectare has increased" and "growing habits are changing with the switch from traditional varieties (Navelina and Clementine mandarins) to others more accepted by the market, including extra-early clementines or late hybrid mandarins.

### **Catalonia**

In Catalonia, the Farmers Union estimates that the production of clementines in the Ebro next season will fall by up to 50% compared to the previous harvest as a result of sustained high temperatures this spring, especially in the month of May. The agricultural organization estimated a production of 77,000 tonnes of clementines, compared to the 154,017 tonnes of the 2014-2015 marketing year or the 121,669 tonnes of the 2013-2014 season. The average harvest volume of the last three years has been of 128,500 tonnes. Therefore, taking into account an average price at origin of 0.24 Euro/kilo for clementines this season and of 0.20 Euro/kilo in the previous one, the income of Catalan growers could fall by as much as 12.32 million Euro. This loss in revenue would particularly affect the economy of the citrus growing regions nearby the Ebro, where direct and indirect activities generated by citrus production are very important.

The Department of Agriculture of the Government of Catalonia has so far only published the estimated production of oranges for the 2015-2016 campaign, which amounts to 35,262 tonnes, well below the 37,480 tonnes, 44,616 tonnes and 57,982 tonnes of the three previous campaigns. Thus, the Department estimates a 25% decline for oranges compared to previous campaigns, and of 5% compared to the previous one, which may result in the total turnover falling by 333,000 Euro.

Source : [www.freshplaza.com/](http://www.freshplaza.com/) 28/10/2015