

"Clemenules clementine is a victim of its own success"

"About 10 days ago, we finished the Clemenules harvest, whose sales will conclude by the end of this week. We will then continue with the Hernandina, Ortanique and Nadorcott," explains Pascual Pla Broch, president of the cooperative Nulexport, based in Nules, Castellon.

With a volume of around 40 million kilos of citrus fruits per year, Clemenules clementines account for about 80% of what the Castellon-based cooperative produces and markets. The rest corresponds to varieties such as the P23, Hernandina, Ortanique and Nadorcott mandarins.



"We export to traditional European markets, but also to third countries, like the United States and Canada, slightly allowing us to prevent oversupply in the European market. We continue conducting tests in Brazil, UAE, etc. The Asian market is a very desirable one, but there would need to be improvements in transportation in order to ship the clementines, something which is already possible in the case of oranges," affirms Pascual.

The heat has affected the quality and sales of Clemenules

While last year there was an oversupply of Clemenules, with around 25% more production than usual, this year's situation has been the opposite. The decline in volumes this year could reach up to 30% and the campaign has also been shorter.

"Even though the season started significantly earlier due to the high temperatures, it has been quite acceptable in terms of prices up until Christmas. The high temperatures eventually affected the quality of the Clemenules and demand stagnated. Right now, the market is still reluctant to consume the final volumes available. It is certainly not normal for temperatures in December to have reached 25 degrees Celsius, when the maximum temperatures should range between 10 and 14 degrees," explains Pascual Pla.



"Now the cold is coming to Europe and this could result in an improvement of sales and prices, but cold temperatures should have arrived two months ago to allow for a more stable demand," adds the president of the cooperative.

Acreage continues to fall

The Clemenules production has declined in recent seasons and, according to Pascual Pla, it is expected to continue declining in the coming years. "The Clemenules has been in the market for over 50 years and its best years are behind us. The variety is a victim of its own success. Its good returns back in the day resulted in it being widely planted in Spain and in the rest of the world, with the consequent increase in production, reaching levels that the market couldn't absorb."

In the province of Castellón, about 90% of the planted clementines are Clemenules, although this trend is now changing.

"For many reasons, including the localised irrigation and changes in the climate, the Clemenules campaign has been shortened by almost a month taking both harvesting and marketing into account. Its production is concentrated in a shorter period and the returns generated are not what they used to be. Now growers are switching to earlier and later varieties, or even other fruits, such as kakis, kiwis or pomegranates."

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