

## Spanish fruit and veg seek new markets in Egypt

Spanish fruit and vegetables are trying to gain a foothold in the Middle East and North Africa. This was the main objective of the participation of several companies and associations of exporters in the first edition of the fair Mac Fruit Attraction in Cairo.

The event, which was held until Saturday, provided the opportunity to enter new strategic markets and come into contact with local operators trading with fruit and vegetables. Although exports of Spanish fruit to Egypt grew by 268% in 2015, from 1,197 tonnes in 2014 to 4,408 last year, Spain remains one of the European countries exporting the least to this Arab State, according to data from the Spanish Federation of Producers and Exporters of Fruits, Vegetables and Live Plants (FEPEX).

The business representatives and regional exporter associations consulted expressed both optimism and caution. The director of the Segovia-based trade and export company Tabuenca, Miguel Tienza, which showcased carrots, stated that he held a series of meetings with potential customers which he expected to yield "very fruitful results" in 2016 and 2017. The company, focused until recently in the Spanish market, started exporting in 2015 and that is why they decided to attend the fair Food Africa, held within the framework of Mac Fruit Attraction.

"We believe that Egypt is the door to access other markets in the Middle East and North Africa, a region which, right now, is strategically important for us in terms of population and economic growth and where we could achieve great sales," said Tienza. The representative of Tabuenca explained that the treatment of the goods at arrival in the port and in the Egyptian market will allow them to make "better and greater exports, not only in terms of volume, but also quality," which entails "excellent economic prospects."

### **Stonefruit from Murcia, to Egypt**

The president of the Association of Producers and Exporters of fruits and other agricultural products from Murcia (Apoexpa), Joaquín Gómez, was more cautious. He said they plan to "test the Egyptian market" with their stonefruit, mainly with nectarines, peaches, apricots and plums. "We have seen that there may be some opportunities to export high-quality products with a good shelf life," he added.

They are not yet exporting fruits and vegetables from Murcia to Egypt: "The Egyptian niche market won't be very large in the short term, but others are doing business with countries of North Africa, so the prospects could be good, but it is still something very new," he stressed.

Meanwhile, the manager of the Association of fruit producers of Extremadura (Afruex), Miguel Angel Gómez-Cardoso, explained that they have been in contact with local customers for a year and a half and some stonefruit containers have already been shipped to Egypt. "We expect new business opportunities to open up," because the Middle East and North Africa is becoming an increasingly important destination," pointed out Gómez-Cardoso, who acknowledged, however, that Egypt is "a limited market, because they are also producers."

Spanish plum exports to Egypt increased, for example, from 2014 to 2015, from 283 tonnes to 1,350 tonnes, while products such as apricots or cherries were exported to this country for the first time last year.

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