

Spain: Citrus acreage falling by 5,000 hectares per season

Immaculada Sanfelú, of the Citrus Exporters' Management Committee, revealed in a conference on the present and future of Spain's orange production that, over the past five years, the acreage devoted to the fruit's production has been falling at a rate of about 5,000 hectares per campaign.

This entails a total decrease of 25,000 hectares, taking into account only the five years cited by Sanfelú, which would represent just over 8% of the 300,000 hectares of the productive ceiling reached by Valencia, Murcia, Andalusia, Tarragona, Mallorca and the Canary Islands.

The main cause for this situation has been, without a doubt, the persistent slump in the prices at origin in recent seasons. Consequently, some experts warn that the decline in the citrus acreage could actually be somewhat higher than indicated above, considering that there are many cases in which there is no total abandonment of the crop, but is only kept going with some irrigation and little more, just in case prices start improving again. In these cases, there is hardly any harvest, or at most, it is scarce and of lesser quality and oriented to the juice industry and not the fresh market, which is the most important in Spain.

Meanwhile, there are also situations in which, given that demand for juices has been going upward, growers choose to devote their orange production to that end. This results in lower costs for the pruning, treatment and harvesting, making the activity more profitable, while contributing to further decongesting the fresh market.

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