

EU increases border check on Turkish lemons

The EU is increasing the frequency of border checks on Turkish lemons from 10 percent to 20 percent due to the use of pesticides. For the present 2016/2017 campaign which began in September, Turkish lemons have been included on Annex 1 of Regulation Commission Regulation (EC) No 669/2009 as they are officially considered to be a risk product due to the presence of pesticide residues.

This decision was supported by all Member States, taking into account the detection in 2015 of 10 batches containing elevated levels of biphenyl residues, and the reports from the EU Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) confirming the deficiencies of the official Turkish control system on the marketing and use of phytosanitary products.

From the beginning of September to the end of October, the European Commission has engaged its RASFF (Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed) to report that 5 batches of Turkish lemons were rejected and were not allowed to enter or to be sold within the European Union. The rejection of the Turkish lemons in Greece (1 case) and Bulgaria (4 cases) came after detecting chlorpyrifos residues in concentrations that more than doubled the MRL (Maximum Residue Limit) established by EU legislation.

As a result of this high number of detections, the European Commission decided this week to amend the import conditions and reinforce border checks to Turkish lemons, increasing the frequency of checks (including laboratory analysis) from 10% to 20%. In practice it means that 2 trucks out of 10 will be inspected at the European border to get import permission. The new control scheme will enter into force as of 1 January 2017.

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The Spanish lemon and grapefruit interbranch organization, Ailimpo, has underscored that “this is an express, official acknowledgment by the European Commission of the risk of lemons from Turkey, insofar as non-compliance with Community legislation regarding pesticides”.

Furthermore, José Antonio García from Ailimpo states that “These 5 health alerts notified through the European database RASFF confirm the deficiencies in the official Turkish control system.”

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