

Argentina: 142,200 hectares of grape affected by bad weather in San Juan

San Juan's weather seems to have played against vintners because, according to estimates, the production grapes in the three producing entities will decrease by 20 to 30%. This would be the lowest production achieved in the last 12 years, according to data from the National Institute of Viticulture. The last harvest amounted to 567 665 600 kilos, which was already the lowest figure recorded since 2004, and the new reduction will mean producers will lose more than 170 million kilos.

This situation is mainly due to a big frost registered on September 6 that affected the departments of Sarmiento, Caucete, and 25 de Mayo, which especially affected the Superior and Flame grape varieties, and a hailstorm on November 23 that affected the areas of Santa Lucia and 9 de Julio.

Juan Manuel Gioja, the head of the Directorate of Irrigation and Climatic Contingencies, stated that the first incident affected about 14,000 hectares of vines, which gave rise to 1,400 complaints. The impact of the hail in November was lower, as there were only about 40 complaints and a total of 200 hectares of grapevines affected. According to the government, so far only 14,200 hectares of grapes, intended for fresh consumption, making raisins and wine, were affected by the inclement weather.

While these are the official figures, Eduardo Garces, head of the Federation of Vintners, said that many times producers didn't report the damage because it hadn't affected their plants, but that it would eventually have an impact on their harvest. Juan Jose Ramos, of the Association of Independent Vintners, said that the greatest damage occurred in grapes for fresh consumption.

According to a recent report, there will be a sharp reduction in shipments abroad this season. In the last harvest, exports amounted to 12 million kilos and, in the best scenario, this season's exports would only amount to some 6 million kilos.

The last harvest was complicated in the region. According to Joseph "Catuco" Molina, a producer and consultant for the vintner sector, said that due to the sector's low profitability, many producers had been unable to make the necessary treatments to prevent diseases caused by moisture in the arbors of the province. Mendoza, which was affected by El Niño, climatic accidents, the incidence of moth vines, and cryptogamic diseases associated with high humidity, continues to have similar problems.

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