

Spain: Valencian agriculture has suffered a catastrophic year

The president of the Valencian Association of Farmers (AVA), Cristóbal Aguado, has pointed out that 2016 has been an "especially catastrophic" agricultural year. For the fourth consecutive year, the sector has suffered the impact of drought and at the end there have been torrential rains as "we hadn't seen for a long time." Thus, the losses have been estimated at a total of 600 million Euro, with 355 million corresponding to the damage caused by the year-end storms, and 245 million to that caused by drought.

At a press conference, Cristóbal Aguado has asked the government for solutions "based on an agrarian pact and a consensus of all political parties."

Aguado recalled that the Region of Valencia is the autonomous region where "prices for agricultural products have fallen the most," about 12%, to which we must add a 20% loss of profitability. Regarding 2017, he believes it could be a "very tough" year because of the growing abandonment of lands (with this figure already at 165,000 hectares); a situation which he reports to be at a critical point, given the lack of interest from new generations in the activity. As for thefts in the field, he assured that every day producers lose 60,000 Euro, due to which he has asked for "politicians to become more involved in the matter."

Aguado has also been very critical of European agricultural policies. "This is not the Europe we want. We want it to be based on solidarity," he stated, referring to the Russian veto and the agreement with South Africa to import citrus fruits as circumstances that are taking a negative toll on Valencian agriculture. "Mediterranean agriculture does not exist in Europe; it is marginalised and discriminated against, and every Spanish government has been an accomplice to this." Thus, he assured that "the countries of the south always lose" and has denounced the "lack of solidarity" of the community institutions, which "seem more concerned in defending the interests of those outside than of those within."

Aguado has complained about the announcement of a 80 million Euro investment in organic farming, while conventional agriculture is not supported, and has shown his displeasure with "assembly politics". "I am concerned about assembly politics generating a diversity of opinions

on specific issues amongst people who have no idea on the subject. That gives the government the will to do as it pleases."

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