

Spain: Verna lemon clones tested to see if they are a viable alternative

The Ministry of Water, Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, through Lorca's Integrated Training and Agricultural Experiences Center (Cifea), is testing the behavior of two clones of the Verna lemon to see if they are a viable alternative to traditional productions in the Valley of Guadalentín.

The general director of Innovation, Productions, and Food Markets, Fulgencio Perez, said that Spain was the largest producer and exporter of lemons in the European Union, and also highlighted the sector's importance in the region's exports as a whole.

In this sense, he said that the introduction of the aforementioned selections "would improve the agronomic, productive, and quality characteristics of the fruit compared to those traditionally cultivated." Therefore, the ultimate purpose of this test is "to serve as an incentive so that producers in the area of Guadalentín start new plantations."

The project, designed for five years, began in 2013, on a one-hectare plot in a farm located in Las Baenas, that was ceded in usufruct by the City of Lorca.

The project involves the cultivation of two clones (51 and 62) of the Verna variety, obtained by the Murcia's Institute for Agricultural and Food Research and Development (Imida), which are currently the most interesting varieties obtained.

It is a tree of great development, rustic, with almost no thorns, and that flowers several times of the year. The first flowering (harvest) is the main one. It starts in March and lasts until May. The fruits of this flowering are collected starting May-June of the following year and have the best quality. They are light yellow, medium to large in size, with a thick, juicy crust. Their juice content is regular, inferior to the one of the Fino variety, has a good acidity and few seeds. The fruits can remain for a long time in the tree, without losing quality. Therefore, they can be harvested gradually.

The clones are grafted on the Citrus Macrophylla pattern, which is currently the most important pattern for the lemon sector, as it has had a good affinity, inducing an early entry into production, and being very productive, leading to an improvement in their maturation.

The data studied during the tests include the varieties' production and harvest quality, the speed in which they start producing, their growth and vigor, resistance to pests and diseases, adaptation to production areas, and ease of pruning, among other aspects.

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