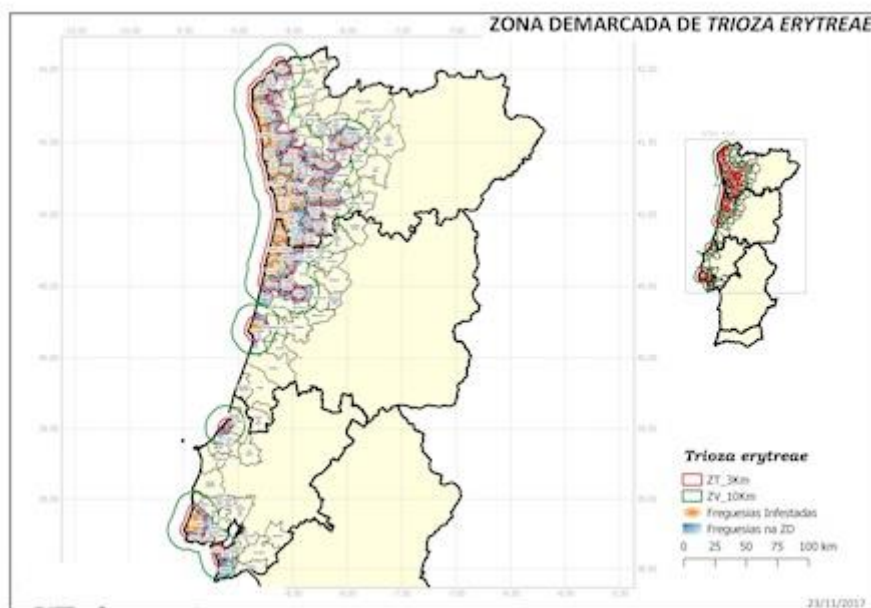


Spain: The HLB vector is only 190 km away from Huelva's citrus

The insect vector of the *Trioza erytreae*, which transmits the devastating Huanglongbing disease (HLB), is already present in citrus plantations near Lisbon, where it has been spreading very quickly and unstopably, as was learned by LA UNIÓ de Llauradors from a report issued by the Portuguese Ministry of Agriculture (see official map updated to 23 November).



The African psyllid capable of carrying the bacteria that causes the dreaded citrus greening has indeed been detected 220 km further south of the last known location in July, in the municipalities of Aveiro and Vago (closer to Oporto), and has moved towards the area around Lisbon. To be precise, the presence of *Trioza erytreae*, which is considered a quarantine pest in itself, although secondary compared to the HLB, not yet present in Europe, has recently been confirmed in the municipality of Almada, so it has already reached the area with the first Portuguese commercial citrus plantations in the Tagus Valley area. The aforementioned vector has ceased to be located only in gardens or private properties, as up to now, and now it is present within or only a few kilometres from an area with more than 1,500 hectares planted, mainly with oranges. This means it is barely 190 km away from the Spanish citrus plantations of the province of Huelva (the second biggest producer in Andalusia, with around 19,000 hectares) and only 170 km away from the main citrus producer in the neighbouring country: the Algarve, with another 14,600 hectares.

Just as threatening is the fact that, further north in Portugal, the already infected area of the Aveiro has spread, with three new outbreaks detected since July in the municipalities of Oliveira do Barro, Anada and Figuera da Foz, whose respective demarcated areas (where quarantine measures are applied) are located a few kilometres from Coimbra (in the central region), which is the location of the country's main nurseries, with 1.2 million plants produced. In terms of phytosanitary safety, the situation is so critical that the Portuguese authorities have already regulated the conditions under which their citrus nurseries will have to operate from 1 January to be considered free from this insect. The goal is for them to avoid the enforcement of restrictions to prevent its spread. Such measures include the isolation of the citrus plantations in nurseries using covers that guarantee the biosecurity of all the plants throughout their vegetative cycle.

The pest has thus been in a process of expansion in the Iberian Peninsula since it was detected in Galicia in 2014, with a great invasive potential for the neighbouring country. Before summer, the insect expanded without interruption along the Atlantic coast from Galicia to the surrounding area of Oporto.

Between September and November, up to six new outbreaks were detected: the three already mentioned (Oliveira do Barro, Anada and Figuera da Foz) plus three others, much more to the south, which have broken the line of continuity in the geographical expansion observed until now (Alcoraca, Sintra/Cascais and Almada). Given that the new locations far exceed the insect's ability to propagate by its own means, it is very likely that the contamination occurred as a result of the transfer of infected plant material.

In some world citrus powers, such as the United States, Mexico or Brazil, HLB has already caused losses worth millions of dollars and is even threatening the very subsistence of the sector, because there is no known cure. All experts in the field warn that the Spanish citrus sector is facing the greatest threat since that of the Tristeza virus, which devastated many of the country's plantations in the late 50's and 60's. In all cases, the arrival of the disease (of the bacterium, not yet present) has only been a matter of time since the irruption of the vector.

The Huanglongbing causes a rapid weakening of the trees, which ends up leading to their death in a few years. It is accompanied by a loss of the productive potential of the plots during the first years of the infection. LA UNIÓ has addressed the Ministry of Agriculture pointing to the need to turn the research, control and surveillance of this vector and/or its disease into a "State issue".

In this regard, it also recalled that if an administration does not carry out the inspection tasks properly and damage is caused as a consequence of its negligence, individual parties may request compensations, as regulated in both Law 39/2015 of 1 October of the Common Administrative Procedure of the Public Administrations and in Law 40/2015 of 1 October of the Legal Regime of the

Public Sector. LA UNIÓN will advise and defend the interests of the producers before administrations that neglect their functions and fail to prevent the citrus crops from becoming infected.

In the same way, citrus growers are encouraged more than ever to be extremely cautious and report any suspicions in order to avoid situations such as those now taking place in Portugal. They should also avoid resorting to any plant materials that don't have a phytosanitary certificate.

Lien article : <http://www.freshplaza.com/article/187638/Spain-The-HLB-vector-is-only-190-km-away-from-Huevas-citrus>