

# Hundreds of hectares of berries damaged by tornadoes in Huelva

Many hectares of berries were devastated by the tornadoes and strong gusts of wind that struck Huelva on Sunday afternoon. The most affected areas, which are located on the border with Portugal, were Ayamonte, Isla Cristina, Cartaya, Lepe, and Trigueros. According to Freshuelva, the tornadoes and winds knocked down greenhouses, damaged structures, and damaged part of the production. The sector was already suffering from adverse weather conditions, as there have been heavy rains and strong winds since last week, and it seems they will continue for at least another week.

"The tornado destroyed hundreds of square meters of strawberry and blueberry plantations. This natural phenomenon bent irons, left our greenhouses without plastic and our fruit on the floor," said Rafael Dominguez, the manager of Freshuelva. "Even though the damage is localized, it took place in a very important berry production area, which had achieved the greatest growth in the area of strawberry cultivation this year. Some of the hectares affected were already in production," he added.

Producers have had to repair their greenhouses in a hurry, as the rains are expected to continue in the province of Huelva during the rest of the week and could cause more damage on the now uncovered lands.

## Strawberry shortage in Europe until mid-March

The abundant continuous rains and the limited hours of sunshine have caused strawberry production to decrease sharply since the last week of February, with levels well below that of the same period last year. In addition, the excess moisture means that not all the fruit will be suitable for commercialization.

"According to forecasts there will continue to be storms and abundant rains for at least a week, so we estimate there will be a shortage of fruit until mid-March. There is a lot of concern in the sector because, even though demand is not usually very high at this moment, everything changes in March. We are getting dangerously close to some dates in which the big European chains make important requests for strawberries and we always try to have sufficient volumes," said Rafael Domingo.

The cold spell that affected a large part of Europe last week has brought down strawberry production in Italy and France. Morocco's production has also decreased due to storms. "We think this will

increase prices significantly. The cold wave has already ended in central and northern Europe and this always benefits demand," he said.

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