

Argentina starts harvesting the lemons for US market

The harvest of lemons for export to the United States began officially and, according to expectations, the first shipment of Argentine lemons will reach that destination in 30 to 35 days.

The Argentine Northwest Citrus Producers Association (Acnoa), which brings together that region's fruit producers, packaging plants, and industries of the sector, stated that the fresh fruit that will be exported to the US market would be conditioned in the packages authorized by the US authority in the coming weeks.

"Since this is the first campaign we'll have in that country after many years of absence, exporters consider that export volumes will be moderate. Developing commercial programs requires time, effort and predictability," said Acnoa.

Supplying the American market with NOA fresh lemon again will also require an enormous commitment and responsibility from the entire productive sector to meet all the commercial programs and phytosanitary requirements, they added.

According to sector sources, "when we say we are harvesting we are really talking about a process that is longer and more complex than just a plain harvest."

"The fruit is harvested, then it is conditioned in packing plants, and the lemon undergoes a de-greening process," they said.

Then, it is left in cold storage until we receive a purchase order from a client so we can pack it, start customs procedures and phytosanitary export controls, so that it can be finally sent to its destination.

Most of the Argentine lemons will arrive at the port of Philadelphia. It takes the cargo around 20 days to arrive to this port from Argentina's main ports.

Different companies, such as San Miguel, already have several orders from US importers and retailers. Specialists in the sector calculate that Argentina will export around 15,000 tons of lemon to the United States, each ton is valued at approximately 1,200 dollars.

Last year, Argentina exported 230,000 tons of lemons, so for now the US market won't have a great weight for this sector, but the idea is for them to grow slowly and steadily.

Currently, the United States imports 50,000 tons of lemons from Mexico and 41,000 tons from Chile, which, due to climatic reasons, will be the main competitor of Argentina's fruit.

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