



## Delay in arrival of Huelva's extra-early stone fruit

The inclement weather recorded in the first months of 2018 in the province of Huelva has had a direct impact on the stone fruit production. The rains, the low temperatures, and the damage caused by strong winds and hail, have prevented Huelva-based producers from meeting the demand from the European markets, which started growing in mid-April.

The rainfall and cold temperatures recorded in March delayed the development of the trees in greenhouses, so the harvest, mainly that of peaches and nectarines, is arriving about 15 days later, and with a considerable reduction in the production volume.

Also, as a result of the instability of the weather, the fruit has not ripened consistently, and this has also taken a toll on its quality. Consequently, in these first few weeks of the campaign, the yield of first class fruit has been somewhat lower than in previous seasons.

The lack of supply in the markets due to the storms (which have also affected other producing areas of the country, such as Murcia) has resulted in higher prices than last season, so the final results may be somewhat better than in 2017. However, José Rodríguez Carrascal, president of the stone fruit sector at Asociafruit, acknowledges that "the high price paid for the fruit will never make up for the lack of quality and the reduced production volume."

The stone fruit harvested so far is the one that has been more directly affected by storms. During the rest of May and in June, it will be the turn of those which have not been as badly hit by the weather. As a result, "fruit quality will improve and growers will see improvements in the revenue generated," said Carrascal.

Huelva has just under 1,000 hectares devoted to stone fruit, mainly peaches, nectarines, Paraguayo peaches, apricots and plums. Most of Huelva's extra-early production (April and May) goes to European markets. As of June, when the fruit reaches higher calibres, the production goes mostly to the domestic market. The campaign will end, as always, in July.

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