



## EC excludes citrus fruits from maximum protection level against pests

The proposal of the European Commission (EC) to change the current regulations in order to improve the control of pests and diseases arriving in shipments from third countries excludes citrus fruits and other sensitive fruit and vegetable products from the maximum level of protection provided by Brussels. The new proposal affects article 42 of the regulation by introducing a category called "High risk plants", under which it is forbidden to import certain productions and plant materials until proven through risk analysis that the countries that export them are able to guarantee their health.

European Commission has included some ornamental plants in this list of "High risk plants", leaving out citrus fruits, whose inclusion had been requested by the Valencian Association of Agricultural Producers (AVA-ASAJA), as well as by other growers in eight countries, including Spain, France and Italy.

"We had high hopes for this new proposal," stresses the president of AVA-ASAJA, Cristóbal Aguado, "and unfortunately, they have been frustrated, once again, by the lack of solidarity of the northern countries. We find it unacceptable for the maximum level of protection not to be granted to a product such as citrus, which is besieged and threatened by diseases such as Black spot, which has been detected in citrus shipments imported from South Africa, or Greening, to name just two." AVA-ASAJA has already sent a letter through the COPA-COGECA (the entity that brings together agricultural organizations and European cooperatives) requesting a rectification from the European Commission.

The Ministry of Agriculture itself has also taken action on the matter and has issued a proposal on this new phytosanitary regulation for border controls. It is asking for citrus fruits, as well as peppers, bitter cucumbers, mangoes, guava, apples, pears, cherries, peaches, plums, grapes and blueberries to be included in this new category. "The debate is open," explained Aguado, "because those amendments to the regulation are expected to come into force at the end of next year, so we must take the issue very seriously, because there is a lot at stake."

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