



## Spain: Valencian citrus campaign starts with uncertainty

The start of the 2018/2019 citrus campaign in the Region of Valencia is marked by uncertainties. Compared to the same week of the previous year, the orange sector is seeing scarce sales operations for the earliest mandarin varieties (Satsuma and Clemenucia). Oronules and Marisol in the case of the clementines) and for the more precocious oranges (Navelina). Furthermore, the prices of most fruits remain stagnant or have dropped, according to the latest newsletter of the Citrus Board of the Lonja de València.

This situation is being observed while the Council of Agriculture's citrus production forecast for this season points to the total volume reaching 3,894,543 tons; an increase of 22.9% compared to the previous campaign. This figure entails a return to a situation of normality in terms of volume with respect to other campaigns.

The fruit's ripening has been slightly delayed this year and the harvest volumes available at this time are still meager. We are, therefore, in a very incipient stage of the season. One of the causes of the stagnation is the low demand in the European market, the main destination for the region's orange exports. The high temperatures recorded in late September in the Old Continent, as well as the presence of citrus fruits from the Southern Hemisphere (especially from South Africa), also partly explain the stagnation in the orange season.

According to the president of AVA-Asaja, Cristóbal Aguado, "the quality of the fruit is excellent and the sizes are growing larger thanks to the latest rains." Therefore, producers should not be nervous and the results should eventually be positive, as long as all links in the commercial chain act in a professional manner."

### Imports

Regarding the situation of imports, the head of the agrarian organization acknowledges that the presence of citrus fruits from the southern hemisphere is somewhat lower than in other years, and that "this is not a factor that is currently taking a negative toll on our prospects, because that fruit is now at its peak in terms of ripeness, while we are only just starting. We believe that, at most, there



will be a slight overlap in the markets with our fruit, as is the case every year," explains the leader of AVA-Asaja.

The Unió de Llauradors also says that the start of the campaign has so far been characterized by "a lack of activity in the fields and in the commercial operations." Consequently, the professional organization led by Ramón Mampel reports that the producers "are nervous about the lack of news and about the messages that are being deliberately spread pointing to a large supply of citrus fruits from South Africa on the store shelves, which is not true, but cause prices to go down. Similarly, others are talking about overproduction, when, in reality, this year's figures are similar to those of the latest campaigns."

The organization laments these actions by "brokers and businesses, who want to take advantage of the nervousness of producers." Even though the prices are similar or somewhat lower, they "could still go down," adds La Unió.

### Decline in temperatures

AVA-Asaja and the Unió de Llauradors agree that the drop in temperatures in Europe (and also in Spain) will be an important factor for Spanish citrus fruits in the coming months, since the cold and citrus consumption go hand in hand. Moreover, the processing industry plays an increasingly important role in absorbing the small sizes, thus helping regulate the fresh market.

"Seriousness, professionalism and calmness will be necessary when the fruit reaches its optimum maturity, so that it can be marketed in a staggered manner and meet the expectations of consumers," says AVA-Asaja.

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