

## Spain: "The citrus campaign is not going as badly as some say"

The Valencian Association of Agricultural Producers (AVA-ASAJA) says that the current citrus campaign is at a decisive moment that will mark its development. For that reason, it has asked both commercial operators and producers to work with the utmost professionalism, with actions that entail benefits for the entire sector. A series of factors have coincided at the start of the current campaign: a delay in the ripening of the fruit, the production of small sizes, a persistence of heat in much of Europe, increased harvest volumes, etc. These have raised some concerns and resulted in pessimism reigning among the producers, even though the real prospects are not as bad as some are picturing them.

The president of AVA-ASAJA, Cristóbal Aguado, confirms this proliferation "of very negative, defeatist messages, which describe a situation that is nothing short of catastrophic, when the campaign has only just begun." The only thing that these ominous messages are achieving is the creation of an adverse commercial environment. This puts producers in a more vulnerable position, which can often end up with them being willing to give the fruit away at bargain prices, when in reality, the real conditions in the orange market are not even close to being as bad. Therefore, the agrarian organization is calling on the producers to stand firm and charge fair prices, since the market situation is bound to improve."

A possible point of inflection is, above all, the fact that the cold, which strongly motivates consumption, has already started to arrive in both Spain and in the rest of Europe. Other important factors are next week's entry into full operation of the processing industry, which absorbs the smaller fruits, and the gradual disappearance of citrus fruits from the southern hemisphere, with the consequent increase in the demand for Spanish productions, which have also achieved an exceptional quality level this year.

### Undesirable practices

However, AVA-ASAJA points out that these positive conditions must be properly exploited with good management and, in this sense, it denounces the existence of bad commercial practices, mainly the



premature harvesting of certain varieties. "We have found out that some have already been harvesting clemenvillas these days, and that is outrageous, because that fruit is still green, and the irresponsibility of a few can harm an entire sector. The consequences of fraud to consumers are disastrous and often irreversible, and that is precisely one of the main problems we have had at the start of this campaign," says Cristóbal Aguado.

In line with this issue, Aguado points out that "you cannot supply the markets with just any product; the public is increasingly demanding and the competition from other countries and other fruits and products continues to grow in this increasingly global world. This context requires betting on the highest quality and professionalism, and if we do not become aware of that reality, we will have a bad time."

Precisely for this reason, AVA-ASAJA is asking the Councils of Agriculture and Trade to carry out strict inspections, both in the field and in points of sale, to ensure that citrus fruits are harvested and marketed at the right time. It also asks the Spanish Government to give a boost to this type of inspections in other autonomous regions and to negotiate, within the framework of the European Union, reciprocity in terms of labor, social and phytosanitary regulations with those third countries with which trade agreements are signed.

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