

Argentina wants to prevent EU from imposing more barriers on its citrus

The citrus producers entrepreneurs grouped in Federcitrus, together with technicians of the National Service of Health and Agri-Food Quality (Senasa), will hold meetings with phytosanitary technicians from the European Union to stop the imposition of new barriers to the entry of citrus fruit into this economic bloc.

The EU could be preparing the application of greater demands related to phytosanitary aspects that could hinder the access of Argentina's citrus products.

"We want to take additional precautions that bring peace of mind to the EU authorities, to avoid retaliation for the detection of the so-called black spot disease that may eventually affect the fruits.

Federcitrus' argument is that the EU adopts increasingly stringent measures to prevent the entry of the citrus black spot into its territory, which is free of this plague. "However, the measures are not scientifically justified and lack a technical basis, since according to experts, the infested fruits (without leaves) do not pose a significant pest risk."

This year the number of detections of black spot in shipments of Argentine citrus increased in the routine inspections carried out upon arrival in EU ports.

"It wasn't a dramatic rise, from 5 interceptions (inspections) of black spot we jumped to 7 and then to 17. After that, they inspected each shipment with a magnifying glass" complained Federcitrus.

Given this jump in the rigor of inspections (which reflects the pressure of local producers who want to stop the entry of merchandise from outside the EU), Senasa and Federcitrus decided to take proactive measures in the plantations and packing lines in Argentina. They increased the number of monitoring in establishments in the pre-harvest season, and in the rest of the production line, until shipment. "We do it so that they don't increase the number of measures to restrict the access of our merchandise, like they did to South Africa," said an executive from Federcitrus.

Argentina exports around 210,000 tons of citrus to the EU each year, at a rate of 1,000 dollars a ton (lemon and mandarins are more



expensive, while oranges are slightly cheaper). That is to say, this is a business worth 210 million dollars a year.

Local businessmen acknowledge that the EU's biggest controls are also due to the fact that, as a result of the devaluation, Argentine fruit became more competitive in that market.

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