

## Spain: Citrus exports to non-EU countries down by 14%

The citrus sector is not achieving good results as far as exports are concerned. At a time with on-going protests by agricultural organizations, such as those convened by the Valencian Association of Agricultural Producers (AVA-Asaja), the Provincial Federation of Agricultural Producers of Castellón (Fepac-Asaja) or the Union of Small Agricultural Producers (UPA-PV), the latest export data confirm the decline in shipments to non-European markets.

The latest citrus export statistics reveal that shipments to countries outside the European Union (EU) up until the end of November have dropped by 14% compared to the same period of the previous year.

Not even the strong rebound of shipments to Canada, under the CETA agreement, has been able to compensate for the debacle in the United States, as well as the declines in Switzerland and Norway.

The export statistics show a total volume of shipments that has stood at 48,395 tons from the beginning and until November 25, a period in which exports to third countries have fallen by 14% compared to the previous season, when the figure stood at 56,260 tons.

Canada has become the biggest destination outside the EU, with shipments that have stood at 16,021 tons up until the last week of November. This represents an increase of 26.7%.

Despite this increase, fruit of the CETA trade agreement, "which the citrus industry has benefited from," the general secretary of La Unió, Carles Peris, says that there are other destinations where exports have collapsed. The most significant case is the US, where the volume shipped has dropped by half (-52%), reaching 4,111 tons. "Morocco's competition and the growth of its own production are the main causes of this regression," argued the general secretary of La Unió, Carles Peris.

The other two big destinations for Spanish citrus outside the EU, Switzerland and Norway, have also reduced their demand in this period compared to the previous year, although to a lesser extent, with decreases of 8.7% and 7.2%, respectively. In total, 13,295 tons were exported to Switzerland and 6,882 tons to Norway.



83% of the citrus exports have ended up in one of these four markets: Canada, Switzerland, Norway and the United States.

In the absence of export data for the European market, given that these statistics are published later, the general secretary of La Unió, Carles Peris, believes that sales in this market will also go down.

However, "we believe that, by the end of the campaign, the citrus export volume will be similar to that of the previous season," says Carles Peris. La Unió blames the drop in shipments to Europe "to the pressure from third countries, especially South Africa."

It is worth recalling that La Unió estimates the losses suffered by the citrus sector of the province of Castellón at 34 million Euro, with 60% (20.4 million) said to be due to an "anomalous" market situation, namely the massive presence of fruit from third countries, such as South Africa, among others, on the European market.

The rest (14 million) corresponds to the damages caused by the weather in October. Sources from the agricultural association explain that "thousands of tons of our mandarins" have remained in the trees, displaced from the markets due to the market saturation caused by South African citrus. They claim that this is the main reason why prices have dropped by up to 23%.

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