

Safeguard clause in trade agreement between the EU and countries of Southern Africa to be studied

Brussels to intervene in Spanish citrus crisis

The European Union has listened to the protests from Valencian producers. The EU Trade Defense Director, Leopoldo Rubinacci, has told the Valencian MEP, Inmaculada Rodríguez-Piñero, that Brussels will study the possible application of the safeguard clause in the trade agreement between the EU and the countries of Southern Africa, which has allegedly caused considerable damage to the citrus sector of the Region of Valencia this campaign. Rubinacci has also asked for a chance to meet with the sector.

The EU Trade Defense Director is in charge of evaluating the application of the safeguard clauses, as well as other defense instruments, against agreements that may be harmful to the EU's interests, and is "fully aware that there is a problem," says Rodríguez-Piñero. This was verified by the Socialist MEP at the meeting held this week with Rubinacci.

Rubinacci also said that in order to move forward, it is necessary for the citrus sector to have "a spokesperson" in Brussels who can convey the perceptions of both producers and companies; and the decision will be made by the Twenty-eight based on actual data. The EU Trade Defense Director put emphasis on both points several times during the meeting, as the priority is to find out "what the exact problem is."

In fact, Rodríguez-Piñero pointed out to Rubinacci that this safeguard clause has already been enforced with other products, such as bananas or rice. In the second case, the European official pointed out that it was due to a very clear violation of human rights in Myanmar, while the first one was defended by the European sector as a whole.

This is actually another of the aspects pointed out by the Trade Defense Director: the need for the problem to transcend the autonomy and even the state, since the European Union seeks to solve European problems, not national ones. Thus, he pointed to the need





for producers from Castellón, Valencia, Andalusia, Murcia and Tarragona (the main producing areas in Spain) to join forces with Italian and Greek citrus growers. Achieving "the sector's unity at the highest level," as well as the presentation of verifiable figures is essential for the EU to take action.

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