

Request for citrus fruits to be considered "sensitive products" in the negotiations

Citrus contact group debates impact of commercial agreements with third countries

The citrus contact group of the FR-ES-IT-PT Joint Committee held its annual meeting on 25 April in Corsica.

At the meeting, in which Portugal has participated for the first time, citrus industry professionals from the four countries, which account for most of the EU production, have carried out an analysis of the current 2018/19 campaign and have discussed the impact of the EU trade agreements with third countries.

In this regard, they have agreed to write a letter to their respective authorities requesting that citrus fruits be considered "sensitive products" in the negotiations for these agreements. Moreover, they have asked the European Commission to conduct an investigation on the current and future impact on the European citrus sector of the different agreements, given the varietal and productive developments in these countries. They have also agreed for a joint letter from professionals of the four countries to be sent to the European Commission, collecting these requests.

Phytosanitary issues have been the focus of the last part of the meeting, with the 4 countries agreeing on the need to enforce preventive and control measures to prevent the entry of diseases present in third countries into the EU, particularly black spot and the *Thaumatotibia leucotreta* (false codling moth). With regard to black spot, the EU regulations should foresee the possibility of a precautionary border closure if a certain level of interceptions is exceeded. Said regulations must also guarantee the application of the same standards for imported fruit for fresh consumption and for processing. Regarding the false codling moth, professionals have expressed their concern about the fact that the third countries





themselves evaluate whether their treatments are as effective as cold treatment, whose effectiveness has been internationally recognized.

Throughout the meeting, the participants have insisted on the key role played by the organization in the sector's good development. The professionals of the 4 countries consider the Contact Group a fundamental tool, since it makes it possible to create a common front to defend the interests of the EU citrus sector.

The Portuguese producers have offered to host the next meeting of the Group in 2020 in the Algarve, which is the country's main production area.

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