

## Citrus producers target 10 pct increase in exports

Citrus producers in Turkey's south are expecting a 10 percent increase in exports this year.

Kemal Kaçmaz, president of the National Citrus Council, told Anadolu Agency that the cultivation season this year started two weeks late, but they are still hopeful about the exports since Turkey has come to a significant position in citrus production.

"Last year, we exported 1.74 million tons of citrus, bringing in \$732 million," said Kaçmaz.

"This year, we exported 5,800 tons of citrus in a week, worth \$2.3 million. We have become an important global player in citrus. We are ranked eighth in the world in production. In exports, we are in the second place in some products and third in others. Our hope this year is to have a 10 percent increase compared to last year's export figures. Last year, we couldn't harvest the crops for 30 days due to heavy winter conditions. If we do not experience severe winter conditions this year, we hope to increase our existing exports to higher levels."

Kaçmaz said these world-class quality fruits produced in Turkey help respond to worldwide demand. He added that they are working on alternative markets as well as traditional markets.

"Even if we cannot make it this year, we will have the opportunity to send citrus fruits to alternative markets in the coming years," said Kaçmaz.

"In our current markets, Russia tops the list, followed by Iraq in the second. Our exports to Europe have increased by 25 percent compared since last year. This is a very positive development for us"

Citrus exports have been significant in total fresh fruit and vegetables exports, Kaçmaz said, adding that the sector has grown to a main one being a sub-sector.



Citrus exports constitute 45 percent of Turkey's total fresh fruit and vegetables exports, he noted.

"Everybody knows that Turkey is a global player in this area, and it has a strong say in production and exports," Kaçmaz said.

"At the moment every move made by Turkey is followed globally by the sector. We are making improvements in a positive way. We receive demands for citrus sales even from countries that we do not have deals with, and we evaluate them all. We are in negotiations to increase our exports especially to far-away countries."

The citrus production sector will be in a much better spot in the near future, according to the council president.

"We have seen positive progress in our efforts with collaboration with Çukurova University to extend the citrus exports season," Kaçmaz said.

"When those studies are over, we will become a country that can produce and exports citrus 11 months a year. Extending the exports season will allow us to include more markets in our exports list."

Kaçmaz added that the 14th International Citrus Congress to be held in 2020 in Turkey, for which the council is relentlessly preparing, will significantly contribute to the sector.

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