

Spain again urges EU to tighten controls on South African citrus

The Europhyt platform of the European Commission (EC) has reported that EU entry points in November there were three more cases of citrus black spot (*Phyllosticta citricarpa*) in citrus shipments from South Africa.



Spain's Valencian Association of Farmers (AVA-ASAJA) warns of the “black year of South African citrus which, with these detections, accumulates a total of 31 interceptions of this serious quarantine disease so far in 2024, demonstrating their unwillingness or inability to ensure the phytosanitary safety of their shipments.”

Therefore, the organization chaired by Cristóbal Aguado is urging the European Commission to tighten controls on foreign imports and prevent the entry of new pests and diseases not present in Europe. "Enough of sacrificing European agriculture, using it as a bargaining chip in all trade agreements, and even shamelessly exposing it to new pathogens that multiply food waste and abandonment of fields," he says.

Aguado says he regrets that the Commission remains "silent on the demand from COPA-COGECA, made at AVA-ASAJA's request, for Brussels to re-establish a maximum number of interceptions of a given disease or pest." He adds, "Once this threshold is reached, and if the risk is deemed unacceptable by the scientists of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), the borders must be closed to imports from that third country."

New detections

In November, the EC detected two shipments of oranges and one of lemons from South Africa infested with black spots. From this third country, there were also two cases of false moth (*Thaumatotibia leucotreta*) on lychees, two cases of Ethiopian fruit fly (*Dacus ciliatus*) on pumpkins, and three cases of Thripidae and Thysanoptera on marigold imports. As for its neighboring country, Zimbabwe, the EC intercepted one case of black spot and one case of false moth in its citrus, specifically in oranges.

Other third countries that recorded detections of diseases and pests in their citrus exports to the EU are Vietnam (a case of citrus bacterial canker *Xanthomonas citri* in limes) and China (another case of *Xanthomonas citri* in grapefruit).

The false moth, which can affect dozens of agricultural and forestry species, was intercepted in avocados from Cameroon, roses from Ethiopia, peppers and roses from Kenya, and roses from Uganda.