

Citrus trade in Castellón has been brought to a standstill by pressure from South African fruit

The citrus sector in Castellón is beginning the 2026–2027 season with little interest from the trade in buying fruit. Growers describe this as unprecedented, especially as harvests are expected to hit record lows for the second consecutive year. "Everything has come to a standstill. There's nothing. I've never seen such a slump," said Roberto Vicent, a grower from Vilavella and head of the citrus sector at the Valencian Farmers' Association (AVA-Asaja) in the Plana Baixa region.

Leading fruit markets have stopped publishing transaction prices, a practice they followed since the end of July in previous years. The sector attributes this standstill to imports from third countries, especially South Africa, and the high incidence of red spider mite infestations on oranges and mandarins. Carles Peris, general secretary of Unió Llauradora i Ramadera, states: "The market has slowed down, and one of the key reasons is that the major operators are waiting for shipments of South African fruit bound for the European Union."

In 2025, South Africa exported a record 204 million 15-kilo boxes of citrus. The Southern African Citrus Growers' Association (CGA) forecasts a 3 to 5% increase in exports this year, with shipments reaching 210 to 215 million boxes. "The CGA plans to allocate 40% of its production to the European market because the ongoing conflict in the Strait of Hormuz has made selling in the Middle East significantly more challenging," Peris stated.

Peris notes the sector has to wait to assess the percentage of fruit damage, but he thinks there is still time.

La Unió forecasts that Castellón will produce 553,524 tons of citrus this season, just 2% more than last season. Clemenules are the main cause for concern, with a forecast production of around 250,000 tons, accounting for almost half of the total estimated harvest.

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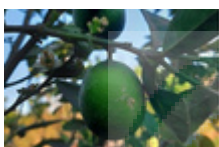
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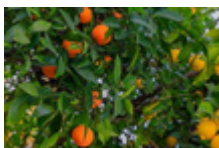
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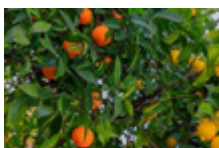
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