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Canada is already the third largest non-EU market for European lemons



Madrid (ots) -

- The North American country, together with the United Arab Emirates, had the largest year-on-year increases in demand for European lemon markets, acquiring a total of 10,937 tons.
- This is due, among other aspects, to the fact that European lemon producers offer a quality, sustainable, audited fruit with carbon and water footprint and social commitment.

Lemon from Europe is a guarantee and a synonym of quality. For this reason, more and more consumers around the world trust this golden citrus fruit produced in the European fields of the Mediterranean basin. So much so that, throughout the last campaign, which ran from October 2020 to September 2021, half of the lemons exported fresh came from member countries of the European Union (EU), a fact that consolidated the organization formed by twenty-seven States as **the largest exporter of this fruit worldwide**, with Canada being the third largest importer of European lemon after acquiring 10,937 tons.

Specifically, and according to the statistical office Eurostat, **the European Union put into circulation during that period 137,137 tons of fresh lemons outside its borders**, that is, 50% on a total of 274,737 tons exported worldwide. And the fact is that, even though domestic consumption in Europe has grown at 3 kg per person since 2015 (+ 10%), the organism has also distinguished itself as **the world's leading producer of fresh lemons**, with 1,708,610 tons noted in the 2020/21 season, well ahead of other major players such as **Turkey** (1,100,000 tons), **United States** (835,000 tons) and **South Africa** (625,000 tons).

As mentioned above, the year-on-year increase in demand from **Canada** (+ 41%) is noteworthy, which together with the **United Arab Emirates** (+ 51%) were the markets with the greatest increase in requests for European lemons during the last season. This situation allowed it to climb to the third position in the ranking of importers, a place previously held by Serbia. However, the North American country still maintains some distance with the **United Kingdom** and **Switzerland**, whose volumes stood at 76,568 and 23,311 tons of lemon imported, respectively.

"The European lemon has **more flavour and firmness** and is marketed under the maximum guarantees. The customer understands that it cannot compare a lemon produced in the southern hemisphere with a European one, since we are not talking about the same product or quality. Apart from quality, Europe offers a **sustainable fruit**, audited with carbon and water footprint and **social commitment**. These elements are essential to strengthen the economic sustainability of all the links that make up the supply chain," says **José Antonio García**, general manager of the **Interprofessional Association of Lemon and Grapefruit of Spain (AILIMPO)**.

Where is the European lemon grown?

Currently only eight countries of the twenty-seven Member States of the European Union have commercial production of lemon. **Spain is by far the largest producer**, accounting for 65% (**1,100,470 tons**) of the EU volume in the 2020/2021 season. It was followed by **Italy**, with 473,280 tons; **Greece**, with 87,190 tons; **Portugal**, with 25,200 tons; and **France**, with 16,690 tons. The remainder to complete the 1,708,610 tons noted by Eurostat came from **Cyprus** (5,280 tons), **Malta** (270 tons) and **Croatia** (230 tons).

In addition, the European Union continues to increase **the area under lemon cultivation**, which in 2021 amounted to **80,311 hectares**, 4% more than the figure obtained a year earlier. As it happens in the field of production, Spain concentrates a majority (60%) of the lemon trees located in Europe. However, it is worth noting the increases achieved by Italy (+ 7.3% year-on-year) and Greece (+ 2.6%) to reach 24,820 and 3,930 hectares, respectively.

Meanwhile, the sector is still immersed in moving towards the **strategy "Farm to Fork" of the European Green Pact**, which aims that by 2030 25% of the land will be produced with organic techniques. Thus, **Spain has already adapted 8,300 hectares to achieve this goal**, according to the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, which represents more than 17% of its lemon extension.

Certified sustainability

The European lemon sector is aware that this reality has an impact on the consumer's purchasing decision and, in view of this situation, has implemented a **model based on improving the environment with an eco-efficiency and prevention approach** that minimizes the use of inputs and resources as much as possible. It even has its own '[Manual of Active Ingredients and Treatment Recommendations for Lemons](#)', which is more restrictive than European standards.

This document is responsible for informing lemon growers about the legal requirements of the different markets and recommends the most effective treatments to rationalize work both on farms and in packing warehouses. These **environmental sustainability practices** are endorsed under the **GLOBAL G.A.P. certification**.

However, the sector's responsibility is also oriented towards the generation and distribution of wealth, considering market conditions, equity and economic justice, which also influence the distribution of useful and profitable goods and services for the community of which it is a part of. This, in turn, has an impact on the **social sustainability** of its environment, which has to do with aspects such as human resources management, occupational health and safety, and employee training and development, for which it has received the **GRASP seal**.

All this comes together in the European production model, the most demanding at a global level, as it guarantees **food safety and traceability of lemons** on their way from the lemon tree to a home and offers this certainty to both manufacturers and retailers through the **IFS Food label**, which certifies quality, transparency and reduction of costs and times.

These and other characteristics of lemon with European origin are disseminated by the **Interprofessional Association of Lemon and Grapefruit (AILIMPO)** in the information campaign **Welcome to the Lemon Age**, with the support of the European Union, with the aim of promoting its consumption among the new generations of U.S. and Canadian consumers; and that they value and appreciate more differentiating properties, for example, its **quality, freshness, sustainability, traceability and food safety** compared to non-EU lemons.

About AILIMPO

AILIMPO is a Spanish interprofessional, based in Murcia, officially recognized by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food of Spain and the European Commission, which represents the economic interests of producers, cooperatives, exporters and the industry of lemon and grapefruit. A sector in which Spain is the world leader in fresh exports and ranks second as a processing country, with an annual turnover of 700 million euros and generating 20,000 direct.

More information

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