

José E. Sanz: "our main threat is the arrival on the European market of citrus from other countries"



By Marta Fernández

José Enrique Sanz is the Manager of the Regulatory Council of the Protected Geographical Indication (IGP) "Valencian Citrus". A sector that, for years, is not going through its best moment. Unpredictable climatology must be added to the entry of third country productions into the markets of the European Union. Productions that have the community support, which is not only a commercial threat for the Spanish sector, but also health, since the demands on plant health are not the same. On this, and on the projection of the Valencian citrus we have talked with him.

e-Comercio Agrario: with what figures of production and commercialization (interior and exterior) has the campaign closed?

José Enrique Sanz: not yet closed, probably shorter than in other years and continue to be labeled with PGI until June.

"Surely this campaign will exceed the certified production of the past, increasing the national market, as more and more supermarket chains are betting on the product with origin and certified quality"

For example, at the beginning of the campaign the Masymas chain incorporated citrus fruits with the IGP label "Valencian Citrus" in all its stores. *We are watching as our label continues to grow and with greater positioning in the distribution channels, championing the quality that is our best letter of presentation.*

ECA: what are the main parameters that are characterizing it?

J.E.S.: the first part of this citrus campaign has produced a great commercial irregularity, *since the supply has not adapted to the demand* and the commercial dynamism has been very little in orange, lemon and mandarin. To all this, several factors have contributed as: the high production with its respective decrease of calibres; absence of cold in Europe, which caused a stagnation of sales; the presence in the European citrus market of the southern hemisphere, both oranges and mandarins in October and November. All this combined with the decrease in consumption due to the increase of competition in the linear of other fruits at the beginning of the campaign. In addition, during the month of December, continuous rains further complicated the situation. With all these factors, *we have given a first half of atypical and very complicated campaign for our sector.*

Since mid-January prices in the field have improved so far, and for both oranges and late mandarins, we can say that *it will be a good end to the campaign if the weather does not stop. The demand for late varieties is increasing as in these months there is less supply.*

ECA: and the main threatened ones that they have to face?

J.E.S.: *the main threat is undoubtedly the arrival in the European market of citrus from other countries, especially from third countries such as South Africa, Morocco, Egypt or Israel. You also have to rely on citrus from Greece and Turkey. In all these countries the costs of production are lower and are a tough competition in price. In addition, it is well known that South Africa has bureaucratic support to place its product in Europe.*

"It is vitally important to join efforts of the whole sector in the promotion to be more competitive in the international markets"

Valencian citrus need more than ever to distinguish itself from the rest and we must remind the European consumer that we have the highest quality citrus.

ECA: what actions are being carried out since I.G.P. to encourage consumption?

J.E.S.: now is exactly one year we present the redesign of our logo with a much more current and direct, it is very important to reach the consumer for the first time and can recognize you in the next. I think that in this sense we have improved a lot even in the application of our logo to the fruit

sticker in the linear. On the other hand, we have continued with different product promotions IGP through our customers. For example, with the Masymas chain, product tastings were held in different stores throughout the Levant area in November. At Christmas, we participate alongside other products with the Ministry of Agriculture through the campaign "Christmas is Valenciana". We also made promotions with Eroski during last January, with animations in several centers of the Basque Country with a gift of a piece of orange IGP by consumer, campaigns in social networks and through bloggers of gastronomy.

At European level, we have also made promotions with supermarkets Leclerc in France, through animations with IGP product tastings for two days, in 15 stores in the northeast of France. Also, also in the wholesale market of Rungis in Paris, through animations with IGP product tastings for two days. Recently, in March, at the local level, the third Valencian Breakfast Week took place with tastings of juice in 37 bars in Valencia, as well as the tasting of juice in the VIII Edition of the Great Naranjada Fallera.

But the most important action of this campaign for the PGI, was undoubtedly during the last fair Fruit Attraction, where the new brand "Orange of Valencia" was presented, whose objective is to create a consumer brand endorsed by our quality figure.

ECA: what are your main demands?

J.E.S.: *our main demand, obviously is the quality and the origin, at the same time we are asked for a great presentation.* In most cases, the IGP product is accompanied by the operator's private label, and both in embedded and girsacs, the presentation is an essential element.

At the product level, we have demand for both oranges and mandarins, citrus in general have always been linked to the Valencian Community for its quality.

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