Cajamar confirms the good health of Almeria's horticulture and analyzes the consequences of Brexit

Cajamar **has confirmed the good evolution of the fruit and vegetables sector in Almeria, during the presentation of its** report on the fruit and vegetable campaign 2016-17, **which took place on November 30th in Almeria. An event attended by more than 200 entrepreneurs, technicians and professionals of the sector, and which has also included the presentation in Almeria of the document** 'Brexit and agri-food sector. Where we are and where we are going'**.**

The president of Cajamar, Eduardo Baamonde, *has highlighted that the horticultural sector of Almeria has reaffirmed its status as a national and international reference, based on its ability to adapt to the market, the permanent incorporation of new technologies, innovation and the improvement of efficiency and the quality of its products*.

> Baamonde has announced the decision taken by the Governing Council to include 'water' as a central element in Cajamar's strategy in favor of the sustainability of the sector

In this line he stressed: "Water is the main challenge we face not only in Almeria but throughout

Spain. Faced with the water crisis, although intensive agriculture is considered the example to follow in terms of efficiency - it consumes 30% of the water for irrigation and contributes 70% of the agricultural added value - *it is essential to reflect on the shortcomings of the current model in our country, which is already considered exhausted, to firmly address the problem of available flows, increased demand, infrastructures, transfers and desalination plants, as well as improving the efficiency of agricultural, industrial and domestic consumption*".

As a sign of this commitment to a more efficient and sustainable agriculture, Baamonde pointed out that Cajamar will continue to bet on the transfer of knowledge, enhancing the continuous improvement of the competitiveness of its customers, contributing the work and studies of its experimental centers in Las Palmerillas and Paiporta, and contributing to improve the management and governance of cooperatives and agri-food companies, through training programs adapted to their needs.

> Roberto García Torrente, director of Agrifood Innovation of Cajamar, has described this campaign as "exceptionally good", given that the favorable quotes obtained in the winter months have compensated in value the lower production and export during this period

Thus, *the average prices and the value of the production increase considerably, also registering an absolute record of exports, with a joint value of more than 2,500 million euros.*

> The production destined to foreign markets already represents more than 76% of the total, while there is a slow but progressive concentration of supply: the 5 largest companies already account for almost 40% of the total volume

Apart from the figures of the campaign, Roberto Garcia Torrente highlighted the confidence that the fruit and vegetable companies of Almeria have been able to thank their clients: "*campaign after campaign, the sector has been solving one challenge after another, as the struggle step chemistry against pests and diseases to the biological control, the implantation of a precise trazabilidad in our products and the set up of systems of autocontrol very demanding, that certify the alimentary hygiene of our offer*".

Record prices in the foreign market

> The cold wave that swept across Europe in the central weeks of the 2016-2017 campaign left much of the market of vegetables free to Almeria's production, which at specific moments acted as the only supplier in the European market

As a result, there was an increase in the average quotations of 20.3% and an increase in the value of production of 17%, *highlighting in this sense the aubergine, cucumber, zucchini and tomato crops*.

Although the items destined abroad decreased by 1.6% in volume, due largely to the low temperatures of winter, their value increased by 15.6%, reaching 2,537 million euros, and registering 76.2% of the total sales from Almeria.

The winter area has grown by 1.5% and stands at 30,456 hectares. Production, on the other hand, has been reduced by 2.6%, finally reaching 3,286,385 tons, mainly due to the December rains and the cold of the second half of January, which tensed the situation in the markets by shortage of supply firing the average quotes.

On the other hand, the apparent change in the positive trend in the increase of the cultivated area with biological control stands out, which has decreased by 3.3% and stands at 25,715 hectares (56.4% of the provincial total). *Given the effectiveness of these techniques, and the advantages they generate both for the differentiation of our productions and for the confidence of the large distribution and the final consumer, it is necessary to reflect on the circumstances of this setback in order to solve them and extend their use the maximum possible.*

Consequences of Brexit

Cajamar has also presented in this same act the report of Horacio González Alemán, of the Thoffood consultancy, entitled Brexit and the agri-food sector: where we are and where we are going, in which the main issues related to the model that will be govern the new relations between the European Union and the United Kingdom. A subject of special relevance for Almeria's horticulture, given that the British market is one of the main destinations of its exports.

> An important consideration highlighted in this report will be the loss of agility that the reinstatement of customs will entail

Thanks to the single market, Almerian cooperatives and alhóndigas could load a tomato truck in Almería and send it to the United Kingdom without having to do more than the stops that the driver needed to refuel. *From brexit it will be necessary to stop at the border, certificates and documentation will have to be issued and inspected, which will be more laborious than before and will take more time*.

The document also includes the collateral effects of brexit on the Community budget, given that the United Kingdom is a net contributor to the European Union budget. Although with regard to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) its role is relativized, since in net terms its contribution represents 5% of the resources allocated to agriculture. Of each euro that the United Kingdom

contributes to the community budget, they return 0.57 cents to the agricultural sector, so that more than half of the income of the British farmer comes from European aid.

> As the brexit coincides in time with the reform of the EU budget and its priorities after 2020, the report concludes that it will be difficult to maintain the resources that the European Union allocates to agriculture at similar levels to the current ones

Source: Cajamar

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