Cebolla Fuentes de Ebro starts the campaign with the sights set on new markets

The Protected Denomination of Origin (PDO) Cebolla Fuentes de Ebro **has started its new campaign with a forecast of production of five million kilos, and its aim in the revaluation of this product (unique in the world for its organoleptic properties), the prolongation of its commercialization and the commitment to new export markets.**

> Cebolla Fuentes de Ebro is sold not only in Spain but also abroad, with France and Italy being its main destinations, although the D.O. does not rule out openness to other markets

One of the main initiatives of the commercialization companies of this product with differentiated quality has been *to commission a research project to the* Center of Research and Technology Agrifood of the Government of Aragon (CITA), *to lengthen the time of commercialization of this product, so that Consumers can enjoy this vegetable for most of the year.* Currently, the harvesting period of Onion with Denomination of Origin Fuentes de Ebro ranges from the middle of the month of July to the month of December.

Cristina Mallor, CITA researcher at the head of this project, with a duration of three years and that is in its equator, has explained that is working in several ways. The first one consists of the tests of

greenhouse cultivation, realizing plantations in different dates, whose first collection was carried out in the month of June, reason why one could shuffle the possibility of advancing the collection a little more than a month with respect to its usual period.

On the other hand, since the CITA are trying to fine tune the cultivation technique by means of microbulbs. With this method, instead of producing onions from seed are obtained from the planting of these small bulbs. Researchers are looking to find out the best time to produce the microbulbs and the best conditions for obtaining onions from their plantation.

The challenge of continuing to grow

During the field day held recently in the environment of Fuentes de Ebro, to present the 2017 campaign to the media, agriculture and gastronomy professionals and bloggers and influencers of the sector, the president of the Regulatory Council of this Denomination of Origin, Daniel Molina, has assured that the producers are "very excited and with expectations that the campaign runs normally, with a production figure within normal and that allows the consolidation of this product, accessible to any consumer, even if it is an exclusive onion ". This presentation gave the opportunity to e-Commerce Agrarian and other means of the sector to witness and experience in situ the beginning of the collection of this onion and its entire process of labeling.

As Molina has pointed out, the production of 5 million kilos estimated for this campaign "is not really a lot, compared to the production of other areas of consumption onion Albacete, but being our one onion so select is more difficult to reach large productions, *which is a challenge for us to continue growing year after year in kilos marketed and farmers, and to be able to reach new markets".*

Onion Agrofuentes, La Corona and Jumosol are the companies that currently sell onions with D.O.P. Fuentes de Ebro, a product that in Molina's words, can be found in large commercial areas of Spain as Alcampo or Mercadona, among others. "*Our challenge, he insisted, is to keep expanding market share and that the consumer demands the label of our product, that is to say, recognize it and identify it against those of the competition*. A market share that, in the case of this onion, is 95% national, according to the president of the Regulatory Board of its PDO: "We are focusing on the internal market, although much remains to be done, although this category of sweet onion was coined by our Denomination, it is true that then people copy quickly and occupy gaps and before that, we can only defend our difference and arguments". "In that line," continues, "we have been working to communicate and transmit to the consumer what we are and offer, so that the latter can then decide."

Faced with this strategy of intensifying the promotion in the national market, this Denomination of Origin is also being made known in foreign markets, especially in France and Italy, "capillary and little by little", through small gourmets stores .

Returning to the domestic market, most of the copies of this onion are, according to the president of his D.O.P., "varieties with a color similar to ours, which are given the surname" sweet. " Given this situation, and as Molina points out, *"we have preferred to invest in publicizing our differential brand rather than in lawyers who defend our product of imitations, because we consider much more effective a good promotional work that allows the consumer to identify our logo and label and relate them to the quality and exceptionality of our onion".*

A unique character that to say of Molina, make the onion of Fuentes of Ebro suitable for target audiences like the infantile one or those people who reject this vegetable by its generally strong flavor. "This is the difference that we embrace and we work to strengthen when it comes to spreading the virtues of our product."

As it explains, the genesis of this sweet onion is in a previous route plan that consisted in the compilation of fifteen different varietal lines to be able to obtain from them their final product. *"That is the challenge of our research project, to use that gift that Nature has been giving us throughout centuries, as well as to take advantage of other varieties that are working in countries like the United States and that allow us to harvest before and to extend the life Commercial of our product ". "Ultimately, he adds, "cclimatize that plant material from other parts of the world, where there is also sweet onion, so that, if it matches our taste parameters, end up being onion with Denomination of Origin Fuentes de Ebro."*

For Daniel Molina, "although we also work with native varieties, we have to be open minded to research with foreign varieties, as our microclimate allows us, and it is also a guarantee of the future for our farmers". "*But really, he says, what gives us our difference is not the plant material, but the environmental, climatological and soil characteristics, something that we have seen in field trials".*

Singularity

The flavor of the Onion Fuentes de Ebro D.O.P. Is soft, of very mild itch, the inner layers are very tender and succulent, allowing that once ingested does not remain its aftertaste in the mouth. It has a thick stem, a globose shape rounded by the root and slightly elongated towards the neck and white-straw coloration on the outer layers, which will be white-green on early onion and on the white, fleshy and crunchy inner layers.

> Its practical absence of itching is due to its higher water content, which makes it softer and tender and dilutes the content of the sulfur compounds causing the same

This special product is obtained because the environment of the Denomination of Origin is characterized by a stepped microclimate, windy and with few rains, in addition to a fertile soil with abundant presence of gypsum and calcium carbonate and with a high pH.

Also, the plant material and cultivation practices, which at some stage are still manual, contribute to making Onion Fuentes de Ebro DOP a unique variety in the world, which also offers great versatility in the kitchen, something that makes it especially attractive for professional chefs.

About D.O.P. Onion Fuentes de Ebro

The Regulatory Council of the Protected Designation of Origin Cebolla Fuentes de Ebro was born in 2007 after the publication in the BOA of the order corresponding to that effect. At that moment, an enormous amount of research began, which ended on October 28th, 2010 with the publication also in the BOA of the order that approved the specific regulations of the Denomination.

Currently, this product is cultivated in 150 hectares divided by the terms of Fuentes de Ebro, Pina de Ebro, Quinto de Ebro, Ebre Osera, Villafranca de Ebro and Mediana de Aragón.

In the current campaign, the cultivated area of Cebolla Fuentes de Ebro DOP increased by 28% compared to 2015, and compared to the year 2011, which is the year in which the Denomination of Origin was started, by 89%.

> The production of Cebolla Fuentes de Ebro has continued to grow, since 725 tonnes were harvested in 2011 to reach 5,000 tonnes this year

Source: D.O.P Cebolla Fuentes de Ebro