

Spain calls for action as citrus prices slump

Increasing overlap between South African fruit and early Spanish varieties causing alarm

The Spanish government is to act to ease pressure on the market after what producers are calling a disastrous start to the 2018/19 campaign.

The increased availability of Southern Hemisphere citrus – in particular from South Africa – has led to a collapse of prices of early mandarin and orange varieties in the European market.

Agriculture Minister Luis Planas has pledged to look at plans to withdraw fruit for transformation into juice in accordance with existing operational programmes following requests from agricultural unions for the government to act.

Ava-Asaja has called for the removal of 200,000 tonnes of fresh citrus from the market to revitalise the campaign, and is asking for the government to assign smaller sized fruit for processing and animal feed – a move that would cost around €30m.

At the same time, Elena Cebrián, the Minister for Agriculture for Valencia, urged the national government to demand that Brussels activate the safeguard clause in its agreement with South Africa which grants preferential treatment for citrus imports and will lead to the elimination of tariffs over the next five years.

The increasing overlap between South African fruit and early Spanish varieties is causing alarm within the industry.

Cebrián said the European Commission should monitor the commercial and phytosanitary impact of its agreement with South Africa more closely in order to protect EU growers.

