

EU demanded to take measures due to high number of citrus shipments containing pests and diseases

Intercitrus demands the European Commission implement "urgent and forceful measures" after, in August, authorities intercepted 26 shipments of citrus imports to the EU from third countries with pests and diseases; many of which are declared quarantine pests, such as black spot (*Phyllosticta citricarpa*), false moth (*Thaumatotibia leucotreta*), citrus mangle (*Elsinoë*) and citrus bacterial canker (*Xanthomonas citri*).



South Africa led interceptions with eight cases of black spot, seven of them on lemon shipments. In the first three months of this season's export campaign to Europe, authorities have detected the Black Spot disease (the main citrus fungal disease that is not present in European soil) nearly twenty times in South African shipments. In addition, in August, Zimbabwe authorities intercepted a shipment with Black Spot and one with False Moth in orange imports from South Africa.

Brazil recorded eight detections, of which five corresponded to the *Elsinoë* fungus and three to the *Xanthomonas citri* citrus canker. Throughout 2024, this third country already has a total of 61 interceptions of both quarantine pests. Among the Mercosur members, Uruguay recorded four cases - three of *Xanthomonas citri* on lemons and one of black spot on oranges - while Argentina had three detections, two of black spot and one of *Elsinoë*.

Regarding other plant imports, in August, the Community entry points intercepted false moth in roses from Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda. Intercitrus pointed out that this pest can spread to citrus and many other agricultural and forestry species.

"We don't understand why Brussels maintains such a passive, complicit, and reckless attitude in the face of such an intolerable phytosanitary risk. It makes no sense to stand idly by while Europe's citrus is threatened by the introduction and expansion of new pests and diseases that would cause unbearable losses, especially in a scenario in which producers have few available phytosanitary active materials to fight them; a scenario promoted by the European Commission itself," stated the president of Intercitrus, Celestino Recatalá.

The new thrips

Intercitrus has highlighted that, due to the lack of effective solutions, Spanish producers are having serious problems this season combating mites, mealybugs, and thrips, especially the new southern African thrips (*Scirtothrips aurantii*). The latter pest is spreading rapidly and virulently, destroying young shoots of orange trees, adults, seedlings, and grafted plants stopping their normal growth and threatening the next harvests.

Thus, Intercitrus demands that the European authorities speed up the research and authorization of economically viable phytosanitary and biological solutions of proven efficacy that will also make it possible to tackle the pathogens already present in EU citriculture.

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