

The world's largest lemon exporting province has lost 20% of its crop to frost this year, according to estimates released in newspaper *La Gaceta*. 

The Tucuman Citrus Association (ATC) in Argentina estimates the percentage is even higher for other citrus crops like oranges and mandarins.

ATC president Roberto Sánchez Loria told the publication that a general analysis of plantations gave certainty that thousands of plants had been lost - especially for younger trees - from frosts with an intensity not seen since 1989.

Even though a large portion of orchards are in the foothills with soils on undulating terrain and preventative measures were in place to protect plants, the effects show just how damaging the frosts were in terms of intensity, frequency and duration.

Surveyors observed fruit with spots in the skin, soft lemons already putrefying and ruptured cells in the pulp, making the fruit unviable for fresh commercial sales and also reducing the amount of lemons that can be sent to processing.

The story reported the situation is made worse by the impacts of last year's drought in northern Argentina.

"This situation has led to the paralyzation of tasks in some packhouses and a reduction to the minimum amount of activity in others," Sánchez Loria was quoted as saying.

"It is presumable that for several citrus establishments that have stopped production, this will be in a definitive way because of the lack of fruit that meets conditions for fresh export.

He called on growers and packers to tighten quality control for lemon exports, in such a way that guarantees the provision of fruit for foreign markets and meets the requirements demand in each country.

"The highest rigor in selection allows us to continue to flaunt the high prestige of our production, with which we can assure that our products will be reliable despite the heavy climatic inclemency suffered in this campaign, and not throw all the efforts undertaken in this activity overboard."

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