

The Chilean citrus industry says it will evaluate the impact of recent frosts on the country's crop, explaining that more time is needed to understand what the effects are.

Temperatures at the beginning of last week reached -1.7°C (29°F) in the Valparaíso region, -2.3°C (28°F) in the Metropolitan and O'Higgins regions, -2.6°C (27°F) in Maule, -2.7°C (27°F) in Bío-Bío and -2.8°C (27°F) in La Araucanía, according to the Chilean Meteorological Directorate.

Since the occurrence of frost is recent, the Citrus Committee considers that it is still too early to estimate the damage to the fruit or directly on the trees, as these can be evaluated after 10 days after the frost and depend on the temperature, the time spent at that temperature, the species and the state of maturity of the fruit.

It also reported that the technicians and professionals of the exporting producing companies are evaluating in the field and so far there is no record of significant damage.

"These evaluations will continue until we are confident that the fruit destined for export will not be damaged by frost," said Juan Enrique Ortúzar, president of the Citrus Committee.

The Committee says that the frost did not affect all areas and citrus orchards in the same way; in some fields, there may be only one sector affected.

"Currently, most orchards in exposed areas have some frost control system or are in positions more protected from the cold within the valleys," Ortúzar explained.

"There has been a learning process in our citriculture and growers have switched to more cold-tolerant crops in the lower sectors of the valleys, where frost affects more intensely."

As for practical measures, the Citrus Committee has developed a Frost Action Manual so that growers and exporters can follow a precise and disciplined work plan to avoid exporting fruit damaged by low temperatures.

These actions include the installation of thermographs in orchards, the temporary suspension of harvests in affected orchards or sectors until the fruit is checked to confirm that it meets the corresponding export tolerances.

"These measures have already been established in similar episodes in previous seasons with very good results," Ortúzar adds.

Finally, the Citrus Committee expects to have more information by the middle of the month

to determine possible adjustments in the estimated export volumes, once the evaluations in the committed orchards are concluded and the period of higher risk expected for the next few days is over.