

After two and a half months of persistent rain, low temperatures and a lack of sun, growers in Spain's Valencia region are beginning to come to terms with the full extent of the damage caused to the majority of their crops.

According to a study carried out by the Asociación Valenciana de Agricultores (AVA-ASAJA), losses are predicted to amount to €150 million. The affected area spans 120.000 hectares in total.

Citrus fruits, particularly oranges and mandarins, are expected to be the victims of the most damage: around €80 million worth, across an area of 50,000 hectares.

As a result of a decrease in their commercial value, hundred of tons of citrus' which were yet to be harvested, ended up falling to the ground or rotting on the tree. Excess humidity caused decay which will reduce future harvests, too.

Citrus farmers, like others, have been forced to accept the additional costs which will be spent on minimizing pests and diseases which can proliferate as a result of a combination of humidity and high temperatures.

Valencian almonds were the second most affected crop, with an estimated €18 million worth of damage. The cold wave at the start of April produced severe frosts in 30,000 hectares. In hundreds of fields, all crops were completely destroyed, resulting in a 70 percent fall in production.

Moreover, stone fruit production (including peaches, nectarines, apricots, plums and cherries) is at a historic low, at just 60 percent of its productive potential. Devastating rainfall coincided with fruit blossom and sprouting, destroying 10,000 hectares and causing losses of €16.5 million.

Other crops struck by the adverse weather conditions included persimmons, vegetables, rice, as well as vines and olive trees, which lost €12 million, €11 million, €1.8 million and €0.7 million respectively.

In addition, €10 million worth of damage to agricultural infrastructure, such as walls, roads and irrigation systems was also caused by heavy rain. Loose soil near rivers and ravines provoked significant blockages in pipes used for irrigation.

AVA-ASAJA expressed a need for direct help and tax measures to be provided by national, local and independent administrations, to ease the challenging situation that Valencian farmers find themselves in.