

United Nations warns of COVID-19 effects on the EU food chain



United Nations, April 6 (RHC)--The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) has warned that increased border controls and the stoppage of daily activities are affecting the supply and prices of fruits and vegetables in Europe.

"Supermarket sales continue. However, following an initial surge in demand, the fruit and vegetable market has weakened and prices may start to fall as customers shop less often than before," the UNECE spokesman Jean Rodriguez said.

He added that the closure of restaurants and hotels has also contributed to the drop in prices for products such as asparagus, lettuce, arugula or potatoes.

Simultaneously, an increase in the prices of imported food is taking place due to the increase in transportation costs and greater logistical difficulties. "Transportation is becoming more difficult and expensive," Rodriguez said, citing that trucks from Italy and Spain no longer make two shifts.

In Spain, the supply of agricultural products is decreasing due to either the stoppage of fruit picking and harvests or the slower pace of packaging processes.

Another factor affecting the market is the shortage of day laborers, many of whom were migrants who returned to their countries or are unable to work given transport restrictions and border closings. This labor shortage "will soon be a serious problem," Rodriguez anticipated, adding that producers of many fruits and vegetables will suffer significant losses due to the inability to harvest their products.

This week, the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) called on the international community to try to minimize the impact of COVID-19 in the food chain.

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