



ZITRUS PROJECT– 10 years' enhanced sustainability

Within the scope of the ZITRUS project, EDEKA – the leading German food retailer – is involved in areas where large production volumes are closely linked to significant environmental impacts. In collaboration with our partner WWF, our goal is to make conventional cultivation of oranges, mandarins and clementines in Spain more environmentally friendly.

WHAT MAKES OUR PROJECT SPECIAL

Collaboration based on mutual trust along the entire value chain



The project has been growing through close partnerships since 2015. Farmers, suppliers, retailers and the WWF are operating in sync – a special form of collaboration in the fruit and vegetable sector. In 2015, our project was rated as a best case by the [Spanish Ministry of Agriculture](#).

Water management and water savings



Efficient irrigation is a key element of the project. Farmers rely for guidance on forecasts of reduced future water availability, saving as much water as possible. This proved particularly beneficial in the exceptionally dry year of 2023: Farmers were better equipped to deal with this exceptional situation, giving relief to neighbouring ecosystems.

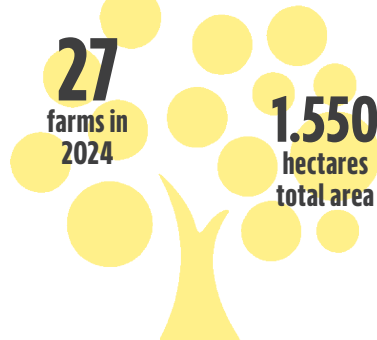
More sustainability amid the same productivity and fruit quality



Be it water usage or pest monitoring – farmers are keeping a closer eye on developments. The outcome: Improvements to the environment and harvests. For instance, fewer pesticides are used and beneficial organisms are encouraged, so that although a pest known as “Thrips Dorado” is causing problems in Spain, the fruit quality on project farms remains stable.

SUCCESSFUL EXPANSION

Launched with a pilot farm in 2015, as many as 27 farms are now taking part in the project. By 2024, the project had already covered 1,550 hectares.



THE ZITRUS PROJECT FARMS



The project fruit have been cultivated and harvested in Andalusia since 2015 and in the regions of Valencia and Catalonia since 2021.





What we have already achieved

The ZITRUS project provides approaches to meet the current challenges. This is because high water consumption, pesticide pollution and depleted soils are threatening citrus cultivation and species-rich ecosystems such as the Coto de Doñana National Park. We are perceiving success stories in the various areas.



More information?
Visit our

[EDEKA project website](#)

WATER IS PRECIOUS

More responsible water use on farms and in the river basin

The introduction of irrigation planning and soil moisture probes has significantly optimised water consumption on the project farms. Moreover, the project uses the „[Water Stewardship Approach](#)“ to promote the responsible use of water resources in the community. In 2024, the average water consumption of the project farms was 3,864 m³/ha, while Spanish citrus cultivation outside the project consumes between 6,000–9,000 m³/ha.

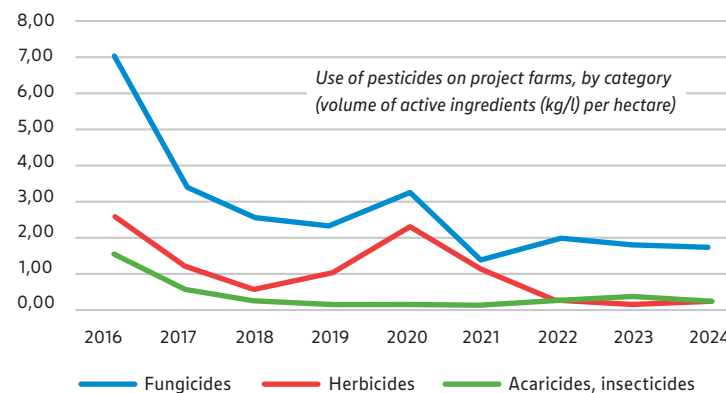
6.000-
9.000 m³/ha
water consumption in
Spanish citrus
cultivation*

3.864 m³/ha
water consumption of the
project farms

*according to the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture



FEWER PESTICIDES



Pesticide savings on project areas

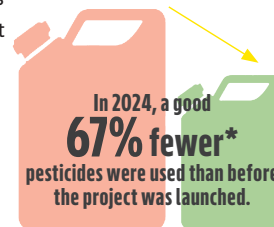
The pesticide plan developed by the project team is proving to be effective on the farms: Since the start of the project, the use of pesticides on the project fields has decreased significantly. Particularly harmful pesticides** are prohibited on principle.

*Volume of active ingredient pesticides on 22 farms for which complete data is available

**According to the Pesticide Action Network (PAN) list

More sustainable crop protection

Thanks to the reduced toxic load, soils can regenerate and beneficial organisms can colonise. Farmers can save money and see their plants become more resistant to pathogens.

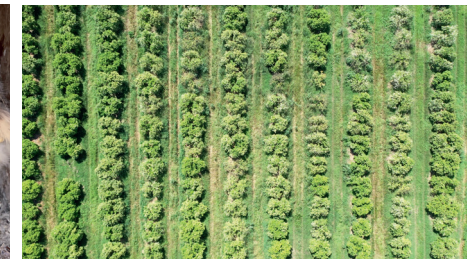


BIODIVERSITY – ALSO IN CONVENTIONAL CULTIVATION

Preserving and fostering biological diversity and ecosystems

Ecological protection zones have been established on 87 hectares (equivalent to 121 football pitches). Retreats have been created there for animals, including endangered species. Since the project was launched, 172 different vertebrate species have been counted on the farms; 6% of these species are threatened with extinction (according to the Spanish IUCN Red List*). And: In the last 5 years, 301 birds of prey have hatched in the 47 nesting boxes installed.

*International Union for Conservation of Nature



FOR BETTER SOILS

More sustainable use of fertilisers, promotion of soil fertility

A reduced and targeted use of solid mineral fertilisers as part of the project reduces the pollution of soil and water by nitrogen. Green verges and vegetation between the rows of trees are among the visible changes on our farms. After all, soils covered with vegetation are less susceptible to erosion, better protected from the sun, store more water and are more biologically active.

