

South Africa embarks on a WTO dispute over EU citrus restrictions

South Africa has initiated a dispute with the European Union (EU) at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) over measures that restrict the country's citrus exports. The contention arises from the EU's efforts to mitigate Citrus Black Spot and the false codling moth, which South Africa deems "unscientific and discriminatory." The country argues that these measures, aimed at addressing the fungal disease and pest, unfairly penalize its citrus exports by suggesting that Citrus Black Spot only affects fruit appearance, not quality.

In response to South Africa's concerns, a WTO panel has been established to review the EU's import regulations on South African citrus. This development follows South Africa's formal request for dispute settlement, leading to the panel's formation, announced by European Commission spokesperson Olof Gill. The Dispute Settlement Body's meeting on July 26 marked the official commencement of the process, with the next phase involving the selection of panellists.

The South African government, expressing confidence in its position, has prepared for all outcomes, including appealing any adverse decisions. The dispute, underscored by South Africa's significant citrus exports to the EU, highlights the broader trade tensions between the two entities. With the citrus industry facing potential annual costs of R2 billion due to EU measures, the resolution of this dispute carries substantial economic implications for South Africa, the world's second-largest citrus exporter.

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