

Fresh Plaza – 4th November 2021

EU protectionism called ‘a black spot on South African citrus growth prospects’

Since the start of the Covid-19 lockdown the agricultural industry has been one of the few bright spots for South Africa, experiencing a real growth rate of 13.1% while the country’s economy contracted 6.4% in 2020.

The citrus industry enjoyed a record-breaking season last year on record production and high demand in key markets, while it also overcame a number of logistical challenges. The boom is expected to continue. Within the next five years SA citrus growers are expected to be exporting 200-million cartons of fruit to key markets worldwide annually, an increase of 54-million cartons from the 2020 total.

The projections for soft citrus, lemons and Valencias alone show an additional R6.8bn in foreign revenue flowing into the country and the creation of just more than 22,000 much-needed jobs over the next three years, jobs that will support many thousands more South Africans.

Critical to this growth is gaining, retaining and optimizing key markets over the next few years, one of these being the EU. About 44% of citrus imported by the EU comes from SA, with local growers sending more than 64.5-million cartons of citrus to the region in 2020, a 24.8% increase on the previous year.

However, the EU has the potential to import an additional 80,000 tons of SA lemons and soft citrus by 2024, generating R1bn in extra export revenue and creating 4,000 new job opportunities. However, expansion in this key market is threatened by the EU’s protectionist import measures regarding citrus black spot (CBS), which have been imposed on local growers.

Source: businesslive.co.za

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