

Deon Joubert, CGA Special Envoy: Market Access & EU Matters:

SA government must lodge a WTO dispute with EU over "unfair" regulations on CBS

The Citrus Growers' Association of Southern Africa (CGA) has requested President Ramaphosa to urgently intervene, and halt unfair trade regulations enforced by the European Union (EU) on the local citrus industry, in particular their discriminatory trade regulations on Citrus Black Spot (CBS), which is threatening thousands of jobs in the sector. This is according to a statement issued by Deon Joubert, CGA Special Envoy: Market Access & EU Matters:



"The CGA and the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (DTIC), the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural development (DALRRD) and the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) have worked together for over ten years to put a stop to the CBS regulations but unfortunately the EU has continued to enforce rules that are unscientific and irrational. The situation has now become so serious that substantial losses in jobs and revenue are on the horizon unless immediate action is taken.

It is critical that the South African government draws a line in the sand and calls for an official World Trade Organisation (WTO) dispute with the EU on their CBS regulations.

CBS is a cosmetic issue that only effects a miniscule percentage of fruit exported, as a result of South Africa's world-class control measures. Even though there is conclusive evidence that citrus fruit without leaves is not a pathway for the spread of CBS, the EU has continued to enforce these unreasonable measures. The EU is the only overseas market holding this position on CBS. Other markets acknowledge that the risk of establishment and spread of the disease through trade in fresh fruit is completely negligible.

It is clear that the EU restrictions are nothing more than a protectionist impulse. Through their actions they are blocking South African citrus to unfairly benefit their own members, specifically the Spanish citrus industry. The South African government is on record that the EU regulations on CBS is a trade restrictive measure and not a plant health issue.

So far this season the EU has claimed a number of interceptions of CBS. However, a pattern of erroneous classifications of CBS has been established. In Belgium and Portugal CBS tests have proven to be unreliable and have resulted in false positives. For instance, Portugal claims a CBS interception from amongst Western Cape fruit, while this province has been proven to be completely free of the pest. This type of action suggests an established agenda to block South African trade and the CGA is in the process of raising formal objections to these interceptions at an EU level.

The CGA calls on the South African government to put a stop to these CBS regulations and fight for South African jobs and revenue. Declaring a WTO dispute is truly a matter of urgency."

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