

South Africa tops EU pest interception rankings as citrus export season gets underway

The Valencian Association of Agricultural Producers (AVA-ASAJA) has reported that the European Union's TRACES platform recorded a total of 15 pest and disease interceptions in citrus shipments from third countries in June; a 66% increase compared to the same month last year. South Africa, which is just starting its citrus export season to Europe, has once again topped the ranking with eight cases (more than half of all interceptions), seven of which involved citrus black spot (*Phyllosticta citricarpa*) in lemon shipments and one involving false codling moth (*Thaumatotibia leucotreta*) in grapefruit.



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La Unió Llauradora has raised its concerns, noting that seven of those South African rejections occurred in June and one in April. Two cases of *Phyllosticta* were also recorded in June in Eswatini, neighboring South Africa, and one in Argentina. The organization says that so far this year, total *Phyllosticta* interceptions have doubled compared to June 2025, rising from 5 to 10.

AVA-ASAJA president Cristóbal Aguado described the situation as alarming. "Such an amount of detections is scandalous, especially at this point in the season, since South Africa hasn't even started shipping the bulk of its citrus. It poses an unacceptable phytosanitary risk for the EU, as we are talking about a disease that, if introduced and allowed to spread through European citrus production areas, would cause growers to suffer huge losses."

Regarding the false codling moth detection in South African grapefruit, AVA-ASAJA is again calling for the EU to extend its mandatory cold treatment requirement for South Africa beyond oranges to cover other citrus species capable of transmitting the pest, including mandarins and grapefruit. The association is also pressing EU authorities to carry out inspections at the source and step up controls at European ports of entry.



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Carles Peris, secretary general of La Unió, echoed those concerns: "The facts have once again proved us right. When extraordinary circumstances arise that could increase phytosanitary risk, European authorities have an obligation to strengthen surveillance and not act as if nothing has happened." Peris stressed the need to "reinforce phytosanitary border controls, carry out more inspections and sampling focused on CBS detection, effectively apply the precautionary principle, and adopt additional temporary restriction measures if circumstances call for it."

AVA-ASAJA also warned of the increase in the number of interceptions from Mercosur countries of pests and diseases classified as EU priority organisms. Argentina recorded four detections in June, three of citrus canker (*Xanthomonas citri*) and one of black spot in lemons, while Brazil added another interception to its long track record, with one case of citrus canker in limes.

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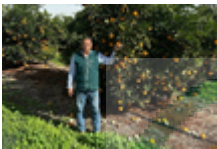
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