

South Africa close to new citrus shipping deal with China

South Africa's Citrus Growers' Association has visited Beijing to secure break bulk reefer shipments before next season

A South African citrus delegation has described talks in Beijing aimed at allowing break bulk shipments to China as "encouraging".

Following the talks, it's hoped that the introduction of this mode of shipment will be put in place ready for the 2017 season.

The visit to Beijing took place after Asiafruit Logistica in Hong Kong and forms part of a bigger South African fruit industry delegation visiting the region. The delegation also travelled to Thailand, where it said that South African citrus is beginning to be recognised in this market as a good balance between quality and value. In Vietnam, the CGA found that Vietnamese importers have developed strong interest in the quality of South African navel oranges.

"From a citrus perspective the CGA was present in China to determine progress on the requests to allow break bulk reefer vessels as an alternative to containers, and the request to consider alternative entry requirements for lemons," the organisation said.

"This information is at hand and will be supplied by South African Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF). It is hoped that this mode of shipping will be permitted by the 2017 season to allow for co-loading shipments to Japan, South Korea and China."

The CGA said it also pleased with discussions on revising the protocol for South African lemon shipments to China. "Good discussions were held with technical experts working on this request. Additional information will be shared, with an outside chance that revision may be accepted before the start of the 2017 citrus season."

Meanwhile the South African season is heading to an early close. With only around 11 million cartons of an estimated 108 million cartons to be shipped, the final export figures show a slight rise from predictions a month ago. While shipments of grapefruit, soft citrus and navels were higher than the original forecast, Valencia oranges were well down and are the main reason for a very much reduced export crop compared to last year.

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