

## Citrus Management Committee claims South Africa “avoiding” Spanish ports

Spain's Citrus Management Committee (CGC) has accused the South African citrus industry of avoiding Spanish ports in a bid to reduce detections of citrus black spot (CBS).



In a release, the organization claimed since a “symbolic” temporary closure of the European market to South African citrus in 2013, arrivals of the country's fruit in Spain had been cut down to “practically nothing”.

The CGC noted South African citrus arrivals in Spain were just 120 metric tons (MT) from January, 2015 to August, 2016, out of a total of 1.1 million MT shipped to the European market.

In a graph within the release it was noted South Africa shipped 19,437MT to Spain in 2013, but this was just 3% of the fruit sent to the EU in the same period, illustrating how in recent years the Mediterranean country has not been a major destination for the sector.

The CGC also accused South Africa of sending fruit to “satellite” entry ports such as Portugal with the intention of reaching the Spanish market, while sending more fruit to the U.K. and the Netherlands where it alleges phytosanitary controls are “more lax”.

South African Citrus Growers Association (CGA) CEO Justin Chadwick declined to give an official comment in response to the accusations, but previous interviews with the group's representatives have indicated spending of ZAR1 billion (€66 million) per annum on associated spraying, market access and fruit deviation costs from CBS-related measures.

Chadwick estimated the amount spent was likely higher now given the weaker rand.

Europhyt interception data shows South Africa had four cases of CBS in Europe between August and September, of which all took place in the Netherlands. This is out of a total of 22 of which 10 were from Argentina and the remainder came from Swaziland (4), Cameroon (2), Vietnam (1) and Bangladesh (1).

While the CGS acknowledged South Africa was not the only country that posed a phytosanitary threat for European citrus production, it claimed the country had a “doubly aggravating” difference as the only major citrus player that has always been within the top three countries for shipment rejections in Europe over recent years.

The group reiterated its allegation that South Africa was avoiding Spanish ports, which it claims did not happen with countries like Argentina, Uruguay or Brazil, which “export much lower figures but dispatch a good part of their shipments to Spain”.

“A [trade agreement](#) recently signed by the EU and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), while representing an extension to Nov. 30 for orange shipments with reduced tariffs and the progressive elimination of tariffs, will make South African citrus more competitive,” the CGC said in the release.

“This will probably translate into a greater tonnage exported.

“Therefore, regardless of the unfair competition this would mean for the Spanish citrus sector – with production and harvesting costs that are much higher – the CGC alerts that this agreement will also exponentially trigger the contagion threat of South African diseases that are unknown in the Mediterranean but as devastating as black spot.”

CGC also raised the alarm about what the deal might mean for potential incursions of the moth *Cryptophlebia Leucotreta*, and even the South African version of citrus greening.

“This is why, in consonance with the rest of the sector’s representatives, the CGC demands an urgent revision from the EC [European Commission], a strengthening of the phytosanitary protocol with South Africa and the establishment of measures or actions to incentivize Spanish ports to recover their inspection activities while giving guarantees of the right phytosanitary controls in the main ports of Europe (in the Netherlands, the U.K. and Portugal mainly).”

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