

New EC import regulations not feasible **Another blow for South African citrus?**

The European Commission is set to propose new measures to regulate Citrus Black Spot and False Codling Moth. This would extend the current measures on CBS and introduce a regulation for the first time on FCM. South Africa, while not the only country to be affected by these possible new regulations, would be severely affected.

Some Southern EC Member States would, in addition to the regulations already in place, like to delete the derogation for citrus fruit processing [juice] with regard to CBS and on the FCM side they want to change the "consignment freedom" approach of the Commission to a mandatory cold sterilisation requirement for citrus fruit across the board.

To date, discussion among the Member States (SCOPAFF) are unresolved – there is no majority in favour of either approach – and the Commission will look to make compromises in view of a tentative vote at the January SCOPAFF.

The European Parliament is set to vote tomorrow, Wednesday 14 December, on the attached draft resolution, already passed last week in the Agriculture Committee, which aims to put pressure on the European Commission and the Member States to change the current approach, delete the derogation for processing in respect of CBS, and impose cold-sterilisation for all imported citrus.

Deon Joubert, Special CGA Envoy for Market Access & EU matters, stressed that if the new measures were implemented they would not come into force until the 2018 citrus season.

Joubert explains that the cold steri technology is 25 years old and these days the South African industry works more on the prevention side and there are projects in place to get the infestation down, he compares it to the reduction in CBS interception which over the last few years went from 18 to only 8 in 2016.

He also states that citrus is not the worst offender where the FCM is concerned, as capsicums and flowers have seen a lot more instances in recent years.

Traditionally the steri treatment has been used for small, long distance markets, such as Japan, and would not be feasible for the short 14 day journey to Europe. The process takes the fruit from 25°C, field temperature, and reduces it to 0.5°C. This is fine for some citrus fruit but not for lemons or the new soft citrus varieties, which would not be able to withstand the treatment. Joubert stresses that there are better ways to deal with it. He also said that not all of the producing areas have the FCM and it would not be wise to spray unnecessarily.

He concludes by saying that what the industry has done to reduce the instances of CBS shows South Africa's commitment to comply with the EU regulations.

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