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No EU interceptions of SA citrus exports

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Future for citrus is looking brighter... CGA CEO, Justin Chadwick.

For the first time in eight years, and late into this season, there have been no citrus black spot (CBS) interceptions by the European Union (EU) reported.

According to Justin Chadwick, CEO of the Citrus Growers' Association (CGA), there have been a few rumours around, but no official interceptions to date. "We are not out of danger yet though," he added, "as it is normally the Valencias which pose the biggest risk - and we are only half way through the season."

Climatic conditions in the northern part of the country were very dry and hot. During the period where you would usually get the inoculation there were no spores around, according to Chadwick. But he also pointed out that in the Eastern Cape - where over 30% of SA's citrus is produced - they did have rain and a climate which might have resulted in CBS.

He attributed the lack of CBS to "a combination of good climate and really good management practices and work by the department of agriculture". Added to that, he noted "a high level of awareness" within the industry.

Meanwhile, Chadwick reiterated an earlier statement that Brexit could be advantageous for SA citrus exports.

But, he added, it would depend on what the UK government did in terms of plant health and tariff regulations. “The obvious hope we have is that the plant health regulations will change. As they don’t have citrus production in the UK, citrus black spot (CBS) would no longer be an issue.”

The other side is tariff and quota issues. At the moment there is one set of regulations for the whole European Union (EU), so it remains to be seen if the UK will make its own new regulations or adopt those in place in at the moment.

“Our hope would be that we would renegotiate the tariffs for citrus again - because they don’t have any domestic producers to protect,” said Chadwick.

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