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US lifts ban on citrus from CBS regions in South Africa

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The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is set to amend regulations to allow for the importation of several varieties of fresh citrus fruit, as well as citrus hybrids, from areas in South Africa where citrus black spot has been known to occur.

“As a condition of entry, the fruit will have to be produced in accordance with a systems approach that includes shipment traceability, packing house registration and procedures, and phytosanitary treatment,” according to a statement from the US Federal Registry.

In addition, citrus fruit would also be required to be imported in commercial consignments and accompanied by a phytosanitary certificate issued by the National Plant Protection Organisation of South Africa, with an additional declaration confirming that the fruit had been produced in accordance with the systems approach.

Citrus Growers' Association CEO Justin Chadwick told FTW Online that the amended regulations would not result in any additional shipments to the US this year but would probably come into effect in 2019.

“We do currently export citrus to the US, around 150 000 tonnes annually, but only from the Western and Northern Cape regions due to citrus black spot,” he said. “This decision means that the area we can export from will be extended to the rest of South Africa.”

He did not, however, anticipate a huge increase in export volumes to the US initially as exporters would need to grow and develop their networks in the country.

There would however definitely be opportunities to grow the US as an export market, especially for grapefruit – as there wasn't much domestic supply in the country during South Africa's harvest season and no one else was really exporting the fruit to the US during that time, he added.

“There is also the opportunity for exports of small volumes of late mandarins around the September period, and valencia oranges,” he said. “However we do need to ensure that we develop the market responsibly and don't rush to overflow the market resulting in the US taking any steps against all of our citrus exports into the country.”

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