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FTW pick: SA slashes false codling moth interceptions

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South Africa has made major inroads in addressing one of its most detrimental agricultural pests, False Codling Moth (FCM).

According to Deon Joubert, Citrus Growers' Association (CGA) special envoy: market access and European Union (EU) matters, there were just nine FCM interceptions during the 2018 citrus season which is a major achievement compared to the 61 interceptions (from official and unofficial sources) last year.

Of the nine interceptions, seven were in the Netherlands and two in the UK.

Four of the interceptions came from Limpopo Valencias, one from an Eastern Cape Valencia, two from Limpopo soft citrus and one each from Western and Eastern Cape navels.

"We are doing very well in our mitigation of FCM," said Joubert.

“Much like CBS our industry has taken a proactive approach and we are working together to achieve zero interceptions.”

FCM became a regulated pest in the EU this year for the first time, subjecting exporters to a new set of requirements – that all fruit must either be sourced from an FCMfree area or must be subjected to an effective treatment to ensure that it’s free of FCM.

According to Joubert one of the biggest successes around FCM was South Africa managing to convince the EU not to introduce a mandatory cold-steri treatment for all South African citrus entering Europe.

“Our point of view has always been that this approach is unnecessary and impractical,” said Joubert.

“Not to mention that as the cold steri treatment is a postharvest mitigation it posed a serious risk to our brand. Instead of killing the FCM prior to harvesting it is now left in the fruit and killed after the fact – which means there is the risk of the consumer cutting the fruit at home and finding a dead larva. That would be very negative for our brand.”

He said ongoing negotiation with the EU had paid off and they had opted not to introduce this mandatory treatment. South Africa had, however, committed to becoming more effective and proactive in its approach to dealing with FCM.

“We don’t believe that FCM poses a risk to European crops as the moth simply does not survive in conditions of less than 25 degrees Celsius.”

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