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Urgent intervention critical to speed up market access for citrus

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The citrus industry has called for urgent action to address market access issues in a number of regions where negotiations appear to have stalled.

“Export volumes to the Asian region have increased over the past ten years, and this region offers the most opportunity for continued growth,” said Citrus Growers’ Association CEO Justin Chadwick. “Daff is on the cusp of getting citrus accepted to Philippines, and oranges into Vietnam. However, there is a need for more proactive action, and a greater sense of urgency,” he said.

“Finalising a change in the lemon protocol to China will be a game changer, and needs to be high on government agenda. Likewise, the in-transit cold treatment for Indian cargo has been pending for too long.”

A final rule that will see the USA providing wider access for South African citrus has also been pending for far too long, in Chadwick’s view. “Daff needs to get answers as to why a rule promised end September, then 15 October, has not yet been finalised.”

Another issue of major concern is the cost of compliance with the EU’s citrus black spot (CBS) regime.

“South African citrus exporters cannot continue to afford R1.86 billion per annum to comply with excessive EU measures for CBS; it is time to settle the technical dispute once and for all,” he said.

The issue of Free Trade Agreements or Preferential Trade Agreements is another thorn in the industry’s side. “Competing southern hemisphere countries seem to be signing these on a weekly basis, while South Africa is hamstrung by regional agreements and capacity constraints that leave the fruit industries fighting for market share with one hand tied behind their back.”

The future success of the industry demands an urgent resolution of these issues.

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