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Indian market sweetens for fruit exporters

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India will soon allow in-transit cold treatment of fresh fruit exports, according to the Citrus Growers' Association (CGA).

Indian phytosanitary regulations at present do not allow for in-transit cold treatment, which means that fruit bound for the country has to be chilled in packing houses before being shipped.

CGA CEO Justin Chadwick told FTW Online that this had been a huge constraint for SA's fruit exports to India as it added delays in a very time-dependent industry, thus increasing costs and making SA exports less competitive.

The revision of the regulations follows successful trial shipments of pears and oranges which underwent in-transit cold treatment.

India will make the changes once two more trial shipments of apple and grapefruit have been cleared by the country's authorities.

"In-transit cold treatment is a method undertaken to remove or mitigate pests in the cargo. Fruits are subjected to cold temperatures for different durations to ensure there are no live insects," said Chadwick.

"This is done during transportation while it is in the container. If the voyage takes about 20 or 16 days, and treatment of a shipment takes 12 days, then by the time it lands at its destination, it has been treated."

He noted that the acceptance of in-transit cold treatment would promote an increase in SA citrus exports to India.

"We currently export around 10 000 pallets of citrus to India, which is a very small number in comparison with total citrus exports, but we envisage that this number could double by the end of this year or beginning of next year," said Chadwick.