'Misinformation' upsets RSA citrus industry

South African citrus sources cry foul once more over reporting on Spanish citrus woes

The South African citrus industry has found it necessary to once again voice complaints about what it has called "damaging allegations" circulating in Europe about the crisis Spanish citrus growers find themselves in.

"The South African community of citrus growers takes no joy in seeing images of unharvested oranges spilling onto orchard floors in Valencia in Spain," said Justin Chadwick of the itrus Growers' Association (CGA). "We are farmers too and we know what this despair and frustration feels like. We also understand that, in times of stress and hardship, emotions run igh and often scapegoats are created."

he European Commission has already denied that the import of oranges and mandarins from South Africa is the reason for this price crisis, according to Chadwick, with the ommission stating that the actual causes are weak demand, prolonged summer heat and smaller fruit sizes, heavy rain and the low level of organisation of the sector.

"However, allow us to correct some damaging allegations currently being circulated," Chadwick said, noting that South African citrus volumes to Valencia declined last year. "Valencia olumes in the last ten weeks of exports from South Africa to the EU declined to 1.5m cartons - down by 1m from 2.5m cartons in 2017," he outlined.

"South African orchard practices and fruit safety are at world-class levels, with the country investing millions each year on research and orchard practices to ensure exemplary hytosanitary compliance rated equal to the best in the world," he continued. "Our accreditation's are run by EU, Japan and US auditors - and are beyond reproach."

hadwick said that perhaps the most unfair categorisation made is that South Africa's social conditions effectively leads to dumping.

"Not only has the South African citrus industry raised the bar of international skills development with our Citrus Academy, we have actively sought to begin to tackle the decades of racial injustice," he said. "This is done by establishing the CGA Grower Development Company in 2016 with the primary objective of making a significant impact on the transformation of the itrus industry. This is something we are justifiably proud of."

hadwick noted that growers together created 10,000 new jobs in citrus last year. South Africa remains committed to its European Union trade partners and to the regulatory system hat keeps the market safe and fair.

"However, we will not sit idly by and allow ourselves to be maliciously undermined by anyone - irrespective of their own unfortunate circumstances," he added

lick here for an exclusive interview with Justin Chadwick at Fruit Logistica 2019 in Berlin