

South Africa's Citrus Growers Association fines companies that export through Spanish ports

The Citrus Growers Association (CGA), South Africa's citrus lobby, which has great commercial interests in the European Union and brings together large fruit and vegetable multinationals, has fined companies in South Africa that exported oranges and mandarins to the old continent through Spanish ports. According to the CGA Annual Report 2019, the phytosanitary controls carried out by State officials in the Border Inspection Posts (PIF) at the Spanish maritime sites show an excess of professional zeal.

According to this business organization, through their controls, the Spanish ports carry out an action that they describe as disturbing in order to maximize yields, and that it does not benefit anyone. Moreover, the report states that in 2018 there were some South African exporters that sent a few containers against the guidelines of the Citrus Growers Association, which led to a full investigation.

Fundraising

According to the report, "the parties involved promised this would not happen again. They all agreed to pay a fine for their actions and to contribute funds to the CRI (an agricultural research institute in South Africa) for CBS research (a.k.a. the black spot). "

The CGA report doesn't state the value of economic sanctions. However, industry sources say they were steep. The phytosanitary programs to control the black spot plague have an annual cost of about 122 million dollars a year, so the aforementioned sanctions come in handy to fund those programs.

The threat of the South African citrus lobby occurs after the rise in the country's citrus fruit sales to Europe, especially after the 2016 trade agreement with the EU which allows it to send its orange production to the EU with reduced tariffs. In fact,

the CGA report calls the 2019 campaign a remarkable success with a record figure of 815,000 tons, and the EU absorbing "about 40% of South African citrus production."

In Spain, exports until the end of September 2019 increased by 21%, when compared to the total of 2018, reaching 1,421 tons of citrus fruits, channeled mainly through the Port of Vigo. Last summer, the MACS shipping company signed an agreement with South Africa's CGA to start the first shipments of citrus fruits in September through the aforementioned Galician site.

The Port of Vigo expected to import 40,000 tons of citrus from South Africa to sell them in Spain every season. However, in view of the flow recorded until September it seems unlikely that they will reach that figure, as most South African exporters continue to avoid Spanish docks.

The South African citrus employer acknowledges openly that they stopped passing through Spanish ports since 2015 because they found more black spot than there should be. They also stated that by not stopping in Spain and having focused on other ports, such as the one in Rotterdam (the Netherlands), they managed to evolve from 28 rejections in 2014 to 2 in 2018. According to the data provided by the Citrus Growers Association then, compounded with the official information regarding South African citrus imports according to the European countries of entry, Spanish Port technicians rejected one out of every 40 inspections that they carried out due to the black spot. Undoubtedly, that figure contrasts with the Netherlands, which required 966 revisions to identify the fungus, or the United Kingdom, which required 2,765.

Phytosanitary Rejections

For the past 15 years, South Africa has consistently led the ranking of third countries with major phytosanitary problems (especially due to pathogens such as the black spot and the false moth) in citrus items detected in European ports. The EU has detected 32 interceptions until October 2019; 9 of black spot, 20 of *thaumtotibia leucotreta*, and 4 of other pathogens. South Africa led these cases on 9 occasions, except in 2018, when Brazil - with 27 interceptions and Argentina - with 22 - exceeded South Africa in the number of cases, according to Europhyt.

Source: Levante (<https://www.levante-emv.com/>)

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(<https://www.unisorting.com/en/products/apple-sorting-grading-packing-machines/>).

