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Citrus industry takes decisive action to expand access to Japanese market

04 Sep 2019 - by Staff reporter



The citrus industry has taken decisive action to expand its access to the Japanese market – presenting its case to none other than President Cyril Ramaphosa.

The opportunity presented itself after a meeting with Minister of Agriculture Thoko Didiza, where Citrus Growers' Association (CGA) CEO Justin Chadwick CGA implored her to intervene in the CGA's market access applications – a meeting that resulted in an invitation for Chadwick to be part of President Ramaphosa's business delegation to Japan.

Writing in his informative weekly blog, Chadwick explains that Japan is a very important grapefruit market, but he believes there is potential to increase the market for other citrus varieties.

“Since 2004, South Africa has had an application for a review of Japan's protocol and the cold treatment requirements – the last submission by Daff was in 2014,” says Chadwick. “The Japanese have an unacceptable policy of requiring access applications per variety of soft citrus, despite international standards showing that there is no varietal difference to treatments,” he adds.

“Despite losing a case at the WTO – they persist with this technical barrier to trade. This is also true for navel oranges – where some varieties are not permitted, and for table grapes where only the barlinka variety is permitted.”

Chadwick briefed President Ramaphosa about these issues, as well as avocado access which has been on the table since 2007. “The President clearly understood what is required and promised to take the matters up in his discussions with Prime Minister Shinzō Abe.

“With over 250 000 extra tonnes of soft citrus, and particularly premier late mandarins that will be very popular in Japan due to their vibrant colour and sweet taste, it is imperative that the soft citrus access list be widened. Addressing the cold treatment review will also allow a wider range of citrus to enter the Japanese market.”

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