

South Africa welcomes EC decision on alleged damage to Spanish citrus campaign



South Africa is very pleased by the European Commission's finding that its citrus exports were not a contributing factor for the price collapse of the 2018/2019 Spanish campaign, says Deon Joubert, the South African Citrus Growers Association's envoy to the European Union .

The South African industry points out that the collapse of the Spanish campaign was also disastrous for the interests of South African citrus because the availability and consumption of excellent Spanish fruit during South Africa's off season bolsters consumption and demand.

The European Commission data on which the finding was based, is consistent with South Africa's data, he says. "Additionally, it aligns with the cautious South African approach to voluntarily close its European campaign on late Valencia exports early over the past four years, before the old duty deadline of 15 October."

The European Commission in its decision states that although South African exports to Europe showed a 5% growth in totality over the season (and not the 15% to 40% increase claimed in the complaint lodged by the Valencian

Agricultural Producers Association), the volume over the late South African campaign have been significantly lower.

Last month João Onofre, the head of the unit for wine, spirits and horticulture at the Directorate-General for Agriculture in Brussels, reiterated the European Commission's view that there was no statistical data to support the claim that an increase in South African exports was harmful to the Spanish citrus industry.

"They maybe don't like it, but the import figures do not show a significant increase in the volume of oranges arriving during the critical period for the European Union," he said.

Citrus industry needs united front against competition from other products

"We're of the opinion that Spain has emphasised its leadership role as the most prolific citrus exporter in the world by co-establishing the World Citrus Organisation," Joubert continues. South Africa has also been a founding member of the World Citrus Organisation, sharing the role of chair with Spain.

This role underscores the importance of enhancing the consumption of citrus commodities by consumers worldwide versus other kinds of fruit, through promoting the availability of excellent citrus from the complementing citrus campaigns in the Northern and Southern Hemispheres.

As an example of this, Joubert mentions Spanish citrus imports to South Africa when there isn't local production; imports that are welcomed by the South African citrus industry. Spanish imports consist of fruit of excellent quality, he notes, and extremely popular among South African consumers.

He adds that Spain is one of the leading solar power suppliers to South Africa, assisting the country with lowering its carbon emissions.

"So with tasty Spanish stone fruit and grapes available in South Africa during its off seasons, Spain is now a household name in South Africa. We believe such cooperation will bolster the strength of the citrus category vis-à-vis other fruit categories because the competition doesn't lie between citrus north and south, but comes from other competing fruit products."

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