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FCM decision against SA citrus not political – trade researcher

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A ban on citrus fruit imports implemented by the European Union in June, resulting in revenue losses of an estimated R200 million for South African exporters, was not political, a local economic development consultancy has said.

According to Trade Research Advisory (TRA), the EU's decision to protect European imports against fruit that could be infected with false codling moth (FCM) was based on scientific accuracy.

According to reports coming out of Europe, TRA Managing Director Dr Martin Cameron refuted claims that the decision was politically motivated, despite its being made mainly at the behest of Spain, which happens to be South Africa's biggest competitor in the EU fruit market.

However, at the time new phytosanitary regulations came into play to protect Europe against FCM, the Citrus Growers Association (CGA) made a strong argument against the claim that South Africa's science wasn't sound enough.

Cameron, though, has said that the EU's decision was based on logic and was well thought out before it was implemented.

Its introduction meant that South African fruit destined for the Netherlands and Italy idled in port well beyond its initial offloading schedule before the reefer vessels carrying the exports were finally worked.

Offloading only went ahead after extra cooling measures were agreed to.

CGA claimed throughout that up-to-date measures based on globally recognised research standards to combat FCM were being implemented to safeguard South African fruit.

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