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# SA and Spain should be ‘friends’ promoting orange exports, says CGA

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South African orange farmers do not compete directly with domestic European producers, according to data released by European Fresh Produce Association Freshfel Europe.

SA Citrus Growers Association (CGA) CEO Justin Chadwick, writing in his weekly newsletter, said the data was “very clear” that SA producers were not competing with locals in the EU market.

“From January to May there are no South African oranges in the market – Spain, Italy, Greece and Egypt are the main competitors, with small volumes from Morocco, Tunisia and Türkiye. This is also the case in November and December,” Chadwick said.

SA production starts in July and runs until October, together with small Spanish volumes as well as southern hemisphere supplies from Argentina, Uruguay, Peru and Zimbabwe.

“Consumers are faced with many options in the fresh produce aisle and they can only buy what is on the shelf. If a loyal orange consumer opts for an alternative due to no product being available, and if they have a good eating experience with this alternative fruit, they may not move back to oranges when they become available again," he said.

"As such, the number one and number two suppliers of oranges to the EU (Spain and South Africa) should be the closest of friends. These two countries can ensure that consumers are able to choose excellent quality, safe, nutritious and healthy oranges all year round."

His remarks come amidst an ongoing dispute with the European Union which introduced new pre-import chilling rules for oranges without sufficient warning, which led to thousands of newly 'non-compliant' cartons of citrus being detained upon arrival at ports in the region. CGA appealed to the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development for its intervention, which set the wheels in motion to successfully negotiate with the European Commission for the release of the containers into the EU market.

Chadwick said growers in the EU had been "fed a lot of fake news".

"The first bit of fake news is that South Africa has a big impact on the market for domestic European oranges."

Data released by Eurostat and other industry sources had clearly exposed the fake news, he added.

"The other fake news is about biosecurity. South Africa has the world's leading citrus researchers; their research ensures that South Africa can export oranges while maintaining the allowable level of protection for domestic European orchards. There is an immense amount of literature on the success of South African global exports and phytosanitary compliance," Chadwick said.

"We would love to engage directly with European citrus growers to dispel the scaremongering of certain elements in Europe. As a global citrus family we should be working together to keep consumers loyal to our fantastic fruit."