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# Citrus growers face rising power costs as they prepare for new EU orange protocol

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Source: Gambin

Eskom presents "a national risk", Western Cape MEC for Local Government, Environmental Affairs and Development Planning (LGEADP), Anton Bredell, has warned after stage 6 load-shedding hit the country in recent weeks.

The move to stage 6, which means at least six hours of power cuts over a period of 24 hours, couldn't have come at a worse time for the country's citrus growers, who are preparing to meet the new EU orange protocol.

The country may be back on stages 4 and 5 this week, with stage 2 planned for the weekend, after the illegal strike at nine power plants led to a loss of generation capacity, but Eskom could switch to stage 6 at any time if necessary. Load-shedding only reached stage 6 once before, for a single day, in 2019.

Bredell has written to national government asking for a coordinated disaster-management planning approach regarding Eskom, saying that his department is liaising with municipalities and the City of Cape Town to ensure all backup systems and emergency equipment are ready for possible system emergencies.

According to *Fresh Plaza*, for citrus cold stores the cost of load-shedding is immense.

"We're running diesel generators all the time. We cannot afford to interrupt the cold chain. We are operating at peak right now," a KwaZulu-Natal cold store manager told the publication.

Managing with power cuts has become the norm for cold storage facilities at a time when margins are already thin and the cost of diesel to run generators is at record highs.

Cold store managers are still awaiting final clarification regarding the implementation of the new protocols for South African orange exports to Europe, which is due to start in two weeks.

Ambient temperature loading of oranges is no longer allowed and exporters must adhere to mandatory precooling for all oranges to 5°C or lower (the 25 days and longer shipping regime option) or 2°C or lower (the second shipping regime option of 20 days and longer).

"It's been hanging over everyone for quite a while. Once we start doing it, we'll have a better idea of how the industry handles it. So it's probably going to cause some challenges with regard to congestion, but let's see. None of us want to speculate," he told the publication.

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