

South African farmers want WTO dispute declared over EU citrus rules

South African citrus farmers want their government to lodge a complaint against the European Union at the World Trade Organization over the European bloc's citrus black spot regulations which they say threaten thousands of jobs.



The measures imposed by the EU in June 2022 require enhanced cold treatment for citrus exports due to concerns over False Codling Moth, a pest commonly found in sub-Saharan Africa, and Citrus Black Spot (CBS), a fungal disease that leaves dark spots on fruit.

According to the WTO, this is the first-ever WTO dispute settlement case initiated by South Africa.

The EU's plant health rules could cut South Africa's orange exports to [Europe by 20% this year](#), according to the Citrus Growers Association of South Africa ([CGA](#)).

South Africa's citrus industry says its current pest and disease control measures are highly effective and accuses the EU of protectionism.

South African farmers are currently battling electricity and logistics challenges and increased input costs and cannot absorb the additional 2 billion rand (\$106.98 million) annual cost for CBS risk management, Deon Joubert, the CGA's special envoy on market access and EU matters, says in a statement.

The CGA says the EU citrus market currently sustains a total of 70,000 jobs in South Africa, generating about \$800 million annually in annual export earnings.

Last year, South Africa lodged its first-ever WTO dispute complaint when it challenged the EU's phytosanitary requirements for imports of oranges and other citrus products related to the False Codling Moth.

Consultations are still underway over that complaint, according to the latest update on the WTO website.

Source: Reuters