

IMPORTS AND EXPORTS

South African fruit exports to Iran could recommence

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Citrus getting sorted in a local fruit-packing plant. Source: Getty Images file photo

South Africa could re-establish citrus exports to Iran following last week's news at the conclusion of the Brics Summit in Sandton that six newcomers, of which Iran is one, have been added to the existing fold.

According to Justin Chadwick, CEO of the Citrus Growers Association, not long ago South Africa exported 45 000 tonnes of fruit to Iran.

Last year though that figure was zero, he said.

Thanks to Iran becoming a member of "Brics Plus" – officially from January 2024 – "there could be a possibility of reviving the citrus trade with Iran".

Chadwick also had some sobering thoughts about South Africa's export potential to other new Brics members, especially in the context of the giddy amount of cynicism levelled at the bloc's expansion.

"For southern hemisphere citrus, the inclusion of Argentina adds another significant lemon exporting country into the mix."

The same goes for including Egypt, whom he said was a “significant orange producer”.

Chadwick added that regarding export destinations for southern African citrus, Brics already had the second- and fourth-biggest importers in the world in its fold – China and Russia.

He said it boded well that the fifth- and eighth-biggest importers, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, were now part of Brics.

At current export volumes, South Africa manages more 600 000 tonnes of home-grown fruit to Brics Plus countries or 30% of all exports.

Ethiopia was the only new Brics member country that didn’t feature in Chadwick’s assessment.

He said whereas Brics Summit Business Forums had been dominated by discussions around the minerals and energy sectors in the past, it was good to see agriculture had taken precedence at last week’s event.

It was furthermore welcoming to witness the focus on tariffs and phytosanitary measures.

Commenting on all that was said about the geopolitics around the bloc bulking out, Chadwick said: “There will always be debates about the merits of being part of Brics.

“Although the initial reason for such a formation was to challenge the existing world order – membership must start to benefit the people in these nations.

“These summits need to go beyond talk shows and deliver tangible benefits for those who pay the taxes.”

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