

Justin Chadwick, CGA:

“South Africa’s WTO call to consultation on CBS not aggressive to EU, but to clear up technical issue”

South Africa's latest call to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) for consultation is to seek independent facilitation for a technical issue on Citrus Black Spot (CBS) that is not aggressive towards the EU. That's according to Justin Chadwick, CEO of the Citrus Growers Association of Southern Africa (CGA).



"We are delighted our government finally called for consultations, that's very important. The call to consultation is not aggressive. We're not fighting with anyone, it's a technical issue for which independent facilitation is needed. It does not help anybody we have to pay R2 Billion for treating cosmetic issues on fruit."

According to WTO rules the parties have a month to meet for the consultation, which is by 15 May, 2024. The South African Government will put together a list of questions and documents they need for the EU to respond as they prepare to meet in Geneva.

The request for consultation was handed in by the South African Government on Monday, with the aim to find a lasting solution to the EU's phytosanitary regulations on CBS, in order to protect the livelihoods of tens of thousands of people in the local citrus industry.

CBS is a fungal infection that can result in cosmetic blemishes on the affected fruit. Despite the world's leading scientists proving that CBS cannot be transmitted through the actual fruit as a pathway, the EU has continued to enforce measures on South African citrus growers. These involve a detailed spray programme and inspections at orchard and pack house level, with a significant financial burden and other unintended consequences for the South African industry.

"We cannot continue with measure as they are, firstly, the cost of the measures alone is huge, the economics of citrus farming changed drastically since 2020. Margins are really slim now, that market is going to be very difficult to manage. It is nonsensical to have the measures in place. There is no risk of CBS being transferred on the fruit to European citrus orchards. Every expert around the world will tell you the fruit is not a pathway. Secondly, the climatic reasons show it never established in the Western Cape due to its Mediterranean climate. The same goes for Australia. The additional spraying, to get CBS free fruit, is not good for the environment and the fruit. We're adamant we need to resolve this issue. There is no risk to Spain, Greece or France or anywhere else in Europe. We are keen to engage and make sure everyone understands this," explains Chadwick.

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