IMPORTS AND EXPORTS

South Africa on track to reach “Vision 260” citrus target

17 Apr 2024 - by Eugene Goddard

Thanks to two major developments, South Africa’s potential to reach its eight-year growth goal of exporting 260 million cartons of citrus by 2032 is well within reach.

First is the news that the relevant government departments representing agriculture and industry have declared a dispute with the World Trade Organisation about the phytosanitary restrictions impeding fruit exports to the European Union (EU).

The restrictions, imposed mostly at the behest of Spain, South Africa’s biggest competitor in the EU export market, are aimed at combating the spread of citrus black spot (CBS), which the local industry says is well under control.

Adhering to EU restrictions to combat the disease caused by the heterothallic fungal pathogen P. citricarpa (teleomorph Guignardia citricarpa) will cost local growers about R2 billion.

Trade and Industry Minister Ebrahim Patel has said that not only is the money for complying with excessive CBS-curbing measures not available, but it effectively prevents South Africa from accessing about a third of its potential export capacity.

Patel added that at the moment, there’s a supply shortage of citrus reaching European markets that only local fruit can fill.

Justin Chadwick of the Citrus Growers Association (CGA) supports the notion that South Africa can meet market demand if allowed to.

With “Vision 260” in mind, the chief executive of the CGA says that estimates for the current exporting season underpin the potential for reaching projected carton targets for 2032.

“We cannot shy away from the fact that at some point very soon, a lot of fruit is going to need to be exported,” Chadwick says.

Tree census data and the industry’s long-term crop projection model highlight the number of hectares that have been planted over the last few years, he points out in his most recent newsletter.

“Through analysis, we can determine that there are sufficient hectares of trees at a maturity age to produce 185 million 15kg cartons for export in the short term.

“Understandably though, factors that contribute positively or negatively to the number of cartons being exported will dictate such a volume being exported from season to season.”

Already, the total 2024 estimate has been pitched just above 180 million cartons – an increase of 10%, Chadwick says.

It must be kept in mind, though, that this will be affected by harvesting and market dynamics as the season progresses.

“From a corridor perspective, the northern region's estimate of 91 million cartons is up from a baseline of 82 million cartons – an increase of 11% on the eastern corridor. “The Eastern Cape estimate of 52.5 million cartons is up from 47.5 million cartons – an increase of 10% on the central corridor, and the Northern and Western Cape regions estimate of 38 million cartons is up from 36 million cartons – an increase of 6% on the western corridor.”

If South Africa successfully avoids export restrictions to the EU, it could create 100,000 employment positions in the sector, Patel said, provided that growers keep pace with year-on-year output estimates.

Meeting growth expectations to produce 260 million cartons of exportable citrus over the next eight years, is well within hand, Chadwick says.

0 Comments

1 Login ▾

G

Start the discussion…

LOG IN WITH

OR SIGN UP WITH DISQUS ?

Name

Share

Best Newest Oldest

Be the first to comment.