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US market opening up for SA citrus

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A “more open attitude towards citrus black spot” is emerging in the United States, and this market should soon open up to South Africa producers countrywide.

So said Piet Smit, a director of the Western Cape Citrus Producers' Forum, in an interview with agriculture magazine, Farmer's Weekly.

According to Smit, the Americans are starting to see citrus black spot (CBS) as less of a threat. They seem to agree with South African scientists' findings that citrus black spot won't spread through exports. “Final export standards and conditions still need to be clarified and agreed upon, however, before fruit can be exported to this market,” said Smit.

Smit added that to stay relevant in the US market, South Africa has to keep track of consumer trends and ensure it stays out of the market when American citrus is available.

“The production window is shortening because Californian producers are planting more early and late citrus cultivars. At the moment, they produce around 60 million cartons of navel, 66% of which are sold in the US, and 10 million cartons of Valencia, most of which is sold in the US. Keep in mind that Florida and Texas are also producing citrus,” he pointed out.

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