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SA suspends citrus exports to Spain

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The Citrus Growers' Association has taken a decision to suspend shipments to Spain over concerns around Citrus Black Spot testing.

The move follows discussions at last week's Citrus Summit in Phalaborwa where the problems of marketing citrus to the EU were high on the agenda. Growers received feedback regarding the risk management system and ongoing research into CBS.

“While South Africa has a comprehensive and robust CBS risk management system, it is also important that identification of non-compliance in the EU is done correctly,” said CGA CEO Justin Chadwick. “During 2014 a South African expert was denied entry into facilities carrying out CBS testing in Spain, and in addition the notifications from Spain included the statement that they inspected asymptomatic fruit.”

The methodology and ability of Spanish officials to correctly identify viable CBS is unknown, he added, and clearly a big concern for South African exporters.

Delegates at the Summit concluded that sending citrus to Spain was a risk until there was clarity on the testing methodology and competence in identifying non-compliance was assured.

The CGA has requested the Department of Forestry and Fisheries to stop issuing phytosanitary certification for shipments to Spain.

“This is not an easy decision as South Africa would like to supply all customers with the fruit they desire, but in the interests of securing the market and meeting the EU’s demand of reducing interceptions it is the right decision,” said Chadwick.

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