

"Good judgement comes from experience, and often experience comes from bad judgement." Rita Mae Brown

JAPAN SOUTH AFRICA BUSINESS FORUM

In 2019 the CGA was invited to take part in of a business delegation accompanying President Ramaphosa and Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition, Ebrahim Patel, to Japan. An outcome of the visit was the creation of a Japan South Africa Business Forum. Then COVID-19 struck, and the Business Forum became stuck. On Monday, the 6th of June 2022, the inaugural meeting of the Japan South Africa Business Forum was held at the Japanese Embassy in Pretoria. Minister Patel, Ambassador Maruyama (Japanese Ambassador to South Africa) and Ambassador Ngonyama (South African Ambassador to Japan) opened proceedings. The CGA was invited to address the Forum.

South African citrus exports are governed by a protocol signed back in 1992. There are some significant elements to this protocol. It is one of the only protocols that I know of that is trilateral – including the then Kingdom of Swaziland (now Eswatini), South Africa and Japan. It was signed when cold disinfestation treatment was a new science, and allowed for the export of oranges (Valencia, Washington navel, Tomango and Protea), lemons and grapefruit.



The vast majority (over 90%) of citrus exported to Japan is grapefruit. Export volumes grew through to 2005, and have been on a steady decline ever since. There are two important changes that need to be made to the present protocol that could reverse this downward trend:

- The cold disinfestation treatment: since the signing of the protocol in 1992 the science of disinfestation treatments has progressed, with many new, effective options now recognised. Japan has allowed other exporting countries to export under these newer, more fruit friendly treatments (for the same pest/product combination). In 2002, South Africa's request for equivalence was turned down. South Africa then embarked on new trials to prove what was already known (that these newer disinfestation treatments were effective) – this information was first shared with Japanese authorities in 2009, and again in 2014. The matter remains unresolved currently. It is important to conclude on this request as it will aid in broadening the citrus export basket to include lemons and other cold-sensitive citrus.
- Japan varietal requirements: despite losing a case in the WTO (brought by the USA) the Japanese continue to insist on clearing fruits variety by variety. Not only did the WTO deem this practise a trade barrier, so did the relevant committees of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC). In the case of mandarins, the Japanese authorised the addition of clementines to permitted citrus products in 2007 (despite the request for access for all mandarins). Since that date, South Africa has provided the technical evidence that should result in all mandarins obtaining access to Japan. Japanese consumers prefer the late mandarin varieties, and are excluded from enjoying good quality, safe fruit.

While all countries have a right to protect their domestic industry, and their domestic flora from new pests, there is sufficient international evidence that the Japanese stance on these two issues is not technically justified.

PACKED AND SHIPPED (Please note that Agrihub data is being investigated therefore the shipped figures are excluded)

End of Week 23 Million 15 Kg Cartons	Packed	Packed	Packed	Shipped	Shipped	Original Estimate	Latest Prediction	Final Packed
SOURCE: PPECB/AGRIHUB	2020	2021	2022	2021	2022	2022	2022	2021
Grapefruit PP (17kg)		1.9 m	2.3 m					
Grapefruit Class1&2 (17kg)		9.4 m	8.7 m					
Grapefruit	11.4 m	12.7 m	12.4 m			16.8 m	15.7 m	17.5 m
Mandarins	8.9 m	10.4 m	9.9 m			34.5 m	34.1 m	30.9 m
Lemons	17.0 m	16.0 m	16.6 m			32.3 m	32.2 m	31.0 m
Navels	9.1 m	10.1 m	7.2 m			28.7 m	27.4 m	27.2 m
Valencia	1.2 m	1.4 m	0.9 m			58.2 m	57.7 m	55.0 m
Total	47.6 m	50.6 m	47.0 m			170.5 m	167.1 m	161.6 m