

"Life shrinks or expands in proportion to one's courage." Anaïs Nin

POLITICS TRUMPS SCIENCE

In the 1970's the South African citrus industry decided to take control of its own research and technical development on the premise that international trading partners would respect the International Plant Protection Convention and ensure that all measures governing the trade in fresh produce would be based on sound science.

The events of the past few months has revealed that this premise is not altogether sound – and that politics often trumps science. This is clear from new measures imposed on South Africa, Eswatini and Zimbabwe with regard to trade in oranges.

In case anybody doubts that these measures are anything but political, one just needs to look at the facts: after deliberating the new measures for two days, and realising the inherent flaws therein the EU Standing Committee on Plant, Animal, Food and Feed (SCOPAFF) withdrew the measures on 29 April 2022. This caused great consternation in Spain, and the Spanish Minister of Agriculture's job was on the line. He flew to Brussels on Tuesday 3 May 2022 and addressed a DG Agri meeting; essentially demanding that the measure be reintroduced. In a hastily convened meeting the next day SCOPAFF reintroduced the measure and voted on it, all in one day!! At the DG Agri meeting Member States Ministers underlined the need for measures to be necessary, justified, proportionate and feasible. Published measures meet none of these criteria:

- **Necessary:** South Africa operates a sophisticated Systems Approach for FCM Risk Management, which already includes different cold treatment protocols, in conjunction with the categorisation of fruit in phytosanitary risk categories, established through intensive pre- and post-harvest sampling and inspection. The cold treatment protocols are then adapted to: (a) the risk profile of the specific fruit in question; (b) the conditions and logistical realities across a vast country; and (c) the characteristics of the fruit in question, including its cold tolerance. This offers the flexibility inherently required by a large range of produce produced across a large and diverse country and ensures on the basis of the best available scientific research that the systems approach meets Probit 9 efficacy standards.
- **Justified:** There is no crisis with regard to FCM interceptions relating to citrus imports. The South African track record shows a decrease with 14, 19 and 15 notified interceptions over the past three years (specific for Citrus Sinensis: 14, 12 and 10), and FCM has only been a quarantine pest for this length of time. This is a positive trend, especially in view of the (increased) volumes traded (99,98% of all shipments had no interceptions); and for 7 out of 15 interceptions in 2021 we have not been provided good evidence that the intercepted larvae were alive (pictures showing brown and black larvae). If anything, there is an issue with other commodities (flowers, vegetables) from other origins.
- **Proportionate:** The proposed measures would severely impact SA exports to the EU (valued at c. EUR 1 billion per annum and accounting for at least 120 000 jobs in South Africa directly and many more in both South Africa and Europe). There are clearly less trade restrictive and equally effective measures available such as the continuation of the existing Systems Approach, which has been further strengthened ahead of the 2022 season.
- **Feasible:** 86.6% of South African oranges exported to the EU in 2021 were loaded under Codes specified in the Risk Management system that do not require pre-cooling. This does not mean that this fruit poses a particular phytosanitary risk: the use of these Codes is only possible if the fruit meets the necessary specifications set out in the Systems Approach (inherently lower pest prevalence, applications of strongest parameters in other areas of the System (both pre- and post-harvest monitoring, sampling, inspection etc.), and lower set-point temperature during shipping).

The CGA and DALLRD fought against this new legislation from when it was first proposed and will now appeal the SCOPAFF decision, which is expected to come into effect on 14 July 2022. We will keep growers informed.

PACKED AND SHIPPED

End of Week 24 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)		2.0 m	2.4 m	1.4 m	1.7 m			
Grapefruit Class1&2 (17kg)		9.7 m	9.2 m	9.0 m	7.7 m			
Grapefruit	12.2 m	13.2 m	13.1 m	11.8 m	10.6 m	16.8 m	15.7 m	17.5 m
Mandarins	10.2 m	12.1 m	11.5 m	9.1 m	9.4 m	34.5 m	34.1 m	30.9 m
Lemons	18.1 m	17.4 m	18.7 m	15.4 m	17.0 m	32.3 m	32.2 m	31.0 m
Navels	11.5 m	12.4 m	10.1 m	8.1 m	6.9 m	28.7 m	27.4 m	27.2 m
Valencia	2.5 m	2.7 m	1.9 m	0.8 m	0.7 m	58.2 m	57.7 m	55.0 m
Total	54.5 m	57.8 m	55.3 m	45.2 m	44.6 m	170.5 m	167.1 m	161.6 m