

# Improved SA-EU black spot collaboration yields citrus exports growth

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**T**hree years of intense collaboration between the European Union (EU) and the Citrus Growers Association of Southern Africa (CGA) has resulted in record South African citrus exports in 2015.

Given that the EU is the biggest export market for South African citrus, the domestic industry continues to invest in measures to ensure that the fruit it exports to the EU is free of citrus black spot (CBS).

Citrus exports to the EU grew at a rate of 22% from January to November 2015. In volume terms, exports to the EU account for 40% of total citrus exports (30% oranges, 66% mandarins, 24% lemons), up from 36% in the prior season.

“This season has by far surpassed everyone’s expectations. I understand that some 100 000 workers operate during the picking season so it is easy to estimate the impact of such exports on jobs creation,” says EU Embassy spokesperson **Frank Oberholzer**.

CGA CEO **Justin Chadwick**, meanwhile, told Engineering News during a recent tour of the Laeveld Sitrus farm, in Limpopo, that, “every year, the regulations and requirements have increased and resources have been stretched to ensure

farmers comply with these regulations”.

He noted that the citrus industry has, together with the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, developed a risk management system – involving many steps – to ensure South African-grown citrus fruit complied with EU regulations and was free of CBS.

“It starts with the registration of orchards and includes many different inspection and spraying processes, as well as an early-detection process where we dip the fruit into a chemical to induce CBS so we can pick up any latent infections.”

He pointed out that, in 2015, only 15 interceptions of CBS were found, compared with 28 in 2014 and 35 in 2013. The risk management system was, however, “complex” and required significant investment of additional resources by farmers.

“It takes a lot of time and money to meet the EU legislative requirements and to ensure that the fruit is inspected on time. Farmers have had to put in additional resources, equipment and people to ensure that they meet these requirements,” Chadwick said, noting that it costs the industry about R1-billion a year to meet the requirements.

“The industry earns R10-billion a year, so 10% is going towards meeting the regulations.” Despite the high cost, South African farmers are expected to see additional benefits beyond the higher citrus exports.

“My interaction with local citrus farmers has shown that the

overall systemic approach to quality management that they have implemented will benefit them on many other levels.

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