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Friday, 17 June 2016

NEWS

Alternative export destinations for citrus growers?

Tshepiso Mokheba, Bloomberg



Citrus growers in South Africa are looking at exporting more fruit to African countries in case shipments to the European Union are curbed due to stricter import requirements from the economic and political bloc.

Citrus from the country, which represent about a third of the EU's imports, will be subject to more stringent checks to prevent citrus black-spot disease spreading to fruit in the bloc, the European Commission, the EU's administrative arm said last week. CBS is a fungal disease, which isn't contagious for people, that causes high losses to fruit production, it said.

The Citrus Growers Association of Southern Africa said it will adhere to the necessary measures in the "short term" while seeking a "long term" resolution for the R8 billion foreign currency earner.

"We are busy with research studies on new markets in Angola, Ghana and Nigeria," Justin Chadwick, chief executive officer of the association, said in a phone interview yesterday from Hillcrest, near Durban in the southeastern part of the country.

Local growers are faced with the risk of not meeting the requirements of the EU, Chadwick said. Despite complying with all the measures and spraying their orchards, growers' fruit may still have CBS as the fungus takes time to develop, he said. It can be latent until near or after harvest, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

About 1% of South Africa's citrus is shipped to other African countries compared with about 40% for its apple industry, which is doing well in Angola, Ghana and Nigeria, Chadwick said.

"It is better for the growers to decide where they will take the fruit," Chadwick said.

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