

Spaniards burn own eyes with sour claim

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SPANISH citrus growers are wiping egg off their faces after making false claims that substandard navel oranges on Spanish supermarket shelves were South African.

It turns out the oranges were grown by the Spanish themselves. The furor started last month in the Valencia region, when the local *Unio de Lauradors* (Growers' Union) rallied loudly against the "South African"

oranges on their shelves.

"The entry of high volumes of bad-quality citrus from the end of the South African season until beyond Christmas has a very negative impact on the local production, which is now at its best when it comes to organoleptic qualities.

"The possibility of the entry of South African oranges for a month and a half more was, is and will be an obvious tool to put pressure on prices," it said. Great was the embarrassment

when it turned out the fruit had been grown locally in Spain, and mislabelled by a Spanish supermarket chain.

Spain has been at the forefront of a failed EU initiative to ban South African citrus from European markets because of blackspot, a condition on the peel that holds no health risk.

South African Citrus Growers' Association president Justin Chadwick could hardly suppress his glee. "Spain has been raising blackspot as a protectionist

measure against South Africa for years," said Chadwick.

"It has since transpired that the retailer mislabelled the fruit as coming from South Africa.

"How this happens — whether it was an honest mistake or the next effort to discriminate against South Africa — we do not know.

"They complained bitterly about the poor quality and how theirs is so much better. Now it turns out the poor quality was produced by them," said Chadwick.



ORANGES: Justin Chadwick

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