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SA aims to grow fresh produce exports to Russia

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The CEO of Fresh produce Exporter's Forum, Anton Kruger. Picture: supplied by the dti

Forum says the country has seen a steady export growth in pears, apples, and table grapes, although the bulk is still citrus.

South Africa wants to increase its exports of fresh produce to Russia, the chief executive of the South African fresh produce exporters forum Anton Kruger said on Wednesday.

Speaking on the sidelines of the World Food Moscow exhibition in Russia, Kruger said South Africa had seen a steady export growth in pears, apples, and table grapes, although the bulk is still citrus, since 2017.

Kruger said: "Russia continues to be an important market for us as 10% of 2.7 million tonnes of fresh fruit exported from South Africa comes to Russia. At one stage it was 12%, but in 2016 it dropped to about 6% because of new label requirements that were introduced by the Euro Agent Commission.

"These added a lot of cost and additional effort in South Africa to ship products, but since 2017 the volumes picked up again and we are now back at 10%."

Kruger said this year's sixth participation at the World Food Moscow was key in that their Russian counterparts and clients appreciated their continuous engagements on these kinds of platforms.

"We also engaged the Russian chamber of commerce and industry and addressed the labelling issue further. We are working towards Russia accepting South Africa's electronic digital barcoded certificates, which is what we are aiming for our members. There will be another meeting with the Russian custom authority to address that.

"We are currently embarking on the process of promoting avocados and to make people aware of its health benefits. While we are looking at this market with all the additional planting in South Africa, and since we do not have access to all markets in the world for our avocados, we noticed that there is a big opportunity for us to introduce avocados and test the Russian market."

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