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SA citrus suspension to safeguard critical EU market

At the tail end of the South African citrus season, it was decided last week to voluntarily cease exports to the EU as a proactive measure regarding citrus black spot.

EUROPHYT (the EU Notification System for Plant Health Interceptions) figures show that there were four interceptions of citrus black spot (*Phyllosticta citricarpa*) on South African oranges in September 2017. In August there were two CBS interceptions on lemons and one on oranges.

According to an industry expert, this decision, which comes after 15 October, a point at which export volumes to the EU anyway drop off dramatically due to import duties and the start of the European citrus season, should be seen as a precautionary measure to minimise risk because of the EU’s critical importance to the South African industry.

“The decision was made in order to send the right message to the EU, to demonstrate our seriousness and the industry’s sense of responsibility.”

The decision doesn’t affect citrus from the CBS-free regions of the Western and Northern Cape nor soft citrus. The risk of the fungal disease increases during the latter part of the season, particularly on Valencias, of which South Africa had exported 49.3 million x 15kg cartons worldwide by the end of week 41.

Justin Chadwick, CEO of the Citrus Growers’ Association, and Deon Joubert, the CGA’s special envoy to the EU, were unavailable for comment. The CGA’s press release continues: “The SA citrus industry in partnership with the SA government have worked tirelessly over the past six years to maintain South Africa’s comprehensive CBS risk management programme. Today’s decision was taken as a measure to ensure continued access in future to the EU market, which is of significant importance to all industry stakeholders, not to mention the 100,000 people we employ.”

In September 2015 a similar decision to cease EU exports early was taken; there were 15 interceptions that season. In 2016 there were four CBS interceptions, illustrating the big strides made since the 2013 season’s 35 interceptions and 2014’s 28 interceptions.

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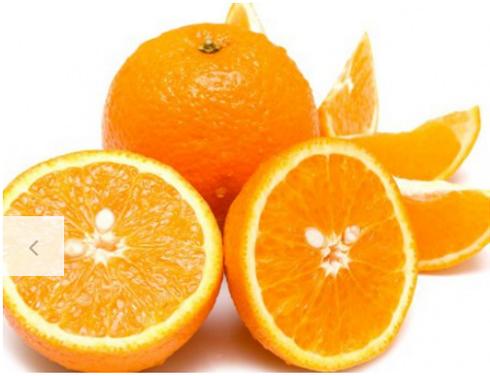
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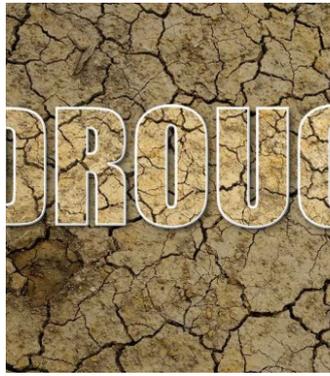
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