

South African citrus industry speaks out on new citrus greening accusations

By Sebastian Ramírez

Justin Chadwick, the CEO of the Citrus Growers' Association of Southern Africa ([CGA](#)), has come out to defend the industry against accusations from some media outlets of a new threat of Huanglongbing (HLB) in the country.



In a statement, Chadwick indicated that contrary to media reports, the local citrus industry is not threatened by a new greening disease.

"Some media outlets are incorrectly reporting that South Africa faces a new disease threat in the form of the African strain of the citrus-greening disease. This incorrectly conflates two diseases," Chadwick said.

HLB (Huanglongbing or Asian Citrus Greening, sometimes casually referred to as Yellow Dragon) is a feared citrus disease that has caused devastation in some citrus-producing regions throughout the world. Chadwick indicated that this disease is not present in South Africa.

However, African Citrus Greening (ACG) is another disease that has been present in South Africa since 1932, and it "has been managed with great success since then," Chadwick said.



"It is important to note that ACG cannot be spread by fruit or seed, and, as a result, there is no restriction on the movement of citrus fruit - and this applies worldwide. Therefore, any suggestion that export citrus can spread this disease is incorrect," he added.

While ACG was detected in October 2023 near Gqeberha, in an area where it has not been detected before, Chadwick explained that ACG is caused by an entirely different species of bacteria, spread by an entirely different vector and is not nearly as dangerous as HLB.

"The detection of ACG in Gqeberha simply required further control measures (control of the insect vector and infected plant material) to continue the successful prevention of the spread to commercial citrus production areas," he indicated.

The future of the industry

Chadwick was emphatic in saying that African Greening is not a threat to the future of the South African citrus industry.

"The future of the industry is looking bright," he said. "Despite climatic and other economic factors that have had a somewhat dampening effect on projected export volumes, the industry is well on course to continue its impressive growth trajectory in the next few years."

He said this is a testament to the hard work of the growers, the quality of South African fruit, and the robust phytosanitary measures implemented by the government and the industry itself.

Related article: [Q&A: South African Citrus Growers Association CEO speaks on the current season, challenges and growth projections](#)

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