

Spain responds to South African call for panel review of EU measures on citrus imports

The World Trade Organization ([WTO](#)) announced that South Africa has requested the establishment of two dispute settlement panels to examine European Union measures affecting the importation of citrus from South Africa into the EU. The request was considered at a meeting of the Dispute Settlement Body (DSB) on June 24.



This is the first time South Africa has requested the establishment of a panel under the WTO dispute settlement system.

The measures in question involve import restrictions imposed by the EU to control the spread of the insect *Thaumatotibia leucotreta*, or False Codling Moth, and the fungus *P. citricarpa*, known as "citrus black spot." Consultations with the EU aimed at resolving the dispute took place but did not result in a mutually agreed solution.

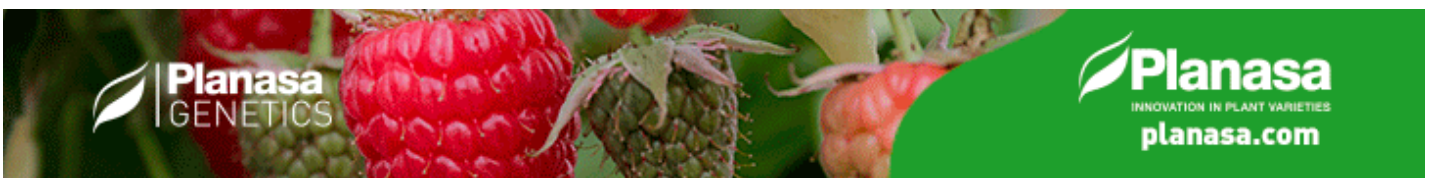
South Africa said that in both cases, the EU measures were not based on scientific principles, are maintained without sufficient scientific evidence, and are more trade-restrictive than necessary to achieve the EU's appropriate level of protection.

Spain responds to the "unprecedented offensive after so many serious plant health risks"

Spain's Citrus Management Committee (CGC) responded to South Africa's request saying they insist on questioning, without any arguments other than its own, the entire body of EU legislation in this regard, including the EFSA and European JRC and EPPO studies, whose scientific basis was key to such regulations.

"We support the firm position that Brussels has maintained at all times in this regard, which has chosen to regret this belligerent attitude and to block these two requests," said Inmaculada Sanfeliu, president of CGC. "Citrus exporters of the CGC align with the position maintained by the Commission because we also stand on the side of science, risk analysis which endorses the regulations that South Africa calls into question."

They added that South Africa's problems with the control of the 'black spot', are not something cyclical.





"In the last three campaigns, the consolidated annual average at the end of the season of imports from the southern hemisphere is already above 40 rejections for this reason, and in 2023, their shipments to the EU broke all records, reaching 51 interceptions," CGC said.

They pointed out that this amount far exceeded the worst average records accumulated by this country between 2012 and 2014.

"The threat to European citriculture is evident."

Related article: [Spain calls for quarantine following African Citrus Greening confirmation in South Africa](#)

South Africa's arguments

However, South Africa says the EU failed to account for regional differences concerning pest risk in the application of the measures.

The measures are having a severe impact on South Africa's citrus exports, which provide jobs to more than 140,000 people in the country, it added. Moreover, the measures affect other countries in the region that depend on South Africa's infrastructure for their citrus fruit exports.

South Africa said it needed to ensure that its rights are safeguarded through WTO dispute settlement procedures but that it is open to continued talks with the EU to secure a mutually agreed solution.

The European Union said it regretted South Africa's decision to pursue panel proceedings in the two cases but maintained that its pest control measures are entirely justified and that it would succeed in any dispute proceedings. The EU added that it was not ready at this meeting to agree to the requests for panels from South Africa.

The DSB took note of the statements and agreed to revert to these matters, should a requesting member wish to do so.