

South Africa suspends shipping of organic lemons to Europe

The South African citrus industry has gone to huge lengths at a huge cost (1 billion Rand), to lower the interceptions of CBS in recent years and have reduced the cases of CBS found in citrus shipments from 35 in 2013, 28 in 2014 to 15 in 2015.

Following internal analysis, studies and reflection on the 2015 interceptions on organic citrus, the group of organic citrus growers of SA, in the non CBS free areas has after consultation with the CGA, voluntarily decided to suspend exports of organic lemons to the EU for the 2016 season.

Deon Joubert, Special CGA Envoy for Market Access and EU Matters said, "This will allow them to further work on risk mitigating measures of CBS in their product range, while significantly reducing the risk of SA CBS interceptions in Europe during 2016. This will have huge financial consequences on these growers but is a sign of their resolve for the long term welfare of the citrus industry in SA."

This decision was strongly supported by all stakeholders in SA and applauded for its long term sustainability drive and focus of the SA citrus Industry at large.

The decision was reached after looking at the information gathered from last year's CBS finds. From the 15 interceptions, 4 were from organic citrus, three of these were organic lemons.

Last year South Africa exported 13 million cartons of lemons to Europe, 130,000 of these were organic lemon. On the face it's not such a huge proportion, but according to Joubert the UK pays a premium for this product and it will be a major hit to those growers and importers.

On a recent visit to Brussels the CGA was able to engage with all stakeholders and the EU Commission in particular on the SA Industry plans for 2016. It was also used to take stock of the SA performance on CBS over the past few seasons and gauge the developments and sentiments in Europe.

The Citrus Industry also thanked the Member States and their inspection services for their cooperation and assistance in 2015. This amongst other things, by giving full access to each CBS interception dossier and the viability tests conducted on these CBS Interceptions.

This allowed SA to diligently analyze each case and improve the SA RMS. The visits to Member States' laboratories by a SA technical delegation under the competent leadership of DAFF during 2015 further enhanced confidence on both sides.

Deon Joubert
Citrus Growers Association
Telephone +27 21 976 58 60
Mobile +27 83 675 3785
Email: deonj@cga.co.za

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