

# Dutch CBS checks are “24 times less effective”, claims Spain’s Citrus Management Committee

Spain’s Citrus Management Committee (CGC) has claimed South African citrus exporters are avoiding the Mediterranean country’s ports in favor of the Netherlands as Dutch points of entry are allegedly far less “effective” at detecting citrus black spot (CBS).



The CGC claimed it had seen unspecified documents from the Citrus Growers Association of Southern Africa (CGA) which it said showed that Dutch inspections during the 2014 campaign were 24-times less effective than Spanish inspections for the CSB-causing *Gignardia Citricarpa* pathogen.

It alleged that it was because of this that the Netherlands received the highest volumes of South African citrus in Europe.

It went on to claim that inspections were not carried out in the Netherlands by the country’s Ministry of Agriculture, but a private company called Kwaliteits Controle Bureau (KCB) headed up by Dutch produce importers.

“As that season advanced, Spanish officials carried out 401 inspections of the 12,092 metric tons (MT) and identified CBS in 10 consignments,” it said.

“The same year, the Dutch ports – mainly Rotterdam – carried out a far greater number of inspections, 4,828, for a volume of fruit that was also greater, 270,976MT, but paradoxically, they were only capable of detecting the disease and denying entry for five consignments.

“With less than 10% of the number of inspections by KCB staff, Spanish phytosanitary inspectors were able to make double the number of inspections.”

The CGC said it had provided various Spanish Members of European Parliament (MEP) with these figures and requested they question the European Commission (EC) on the level of independence the private Dutch company has over the country’s control protocols.

It also called on the EC to adopt stricter measures on South African citrus imports to prevent the entry of CBS.

## South African response

In a statement sent to *Fresh Fruit Portal*, Citrus Growers Association of Southern Africa (CGA) CEO Justin Chadwick said all European countries had been carrying out inspections in the same way.

"The South African Department of Agriculture [DAFF] and leading CBS experts visited a number of member states to determine their inspections of citrus for CBS," he said.

"Apart from the Spanish officials (who seemed to be over zealous in singling out South African citrus for special treatment), the delegation reported back that all member states were carrying out their activities in a similar manner."

Europhyt interception data shows South Africa had four cases of CBS in Europe between August and September last year, of which all took place in the Netherlands. This is out of a total of 22 of which 10 were from Argentina and the remainder came from Swaziland (4), Cameroon (2), Vietnam (1) and Bangladesh (1).

Chadwick also said that the South African citrus industry had made significant efforts and incurred considerable costs implementing a risk management system.

"At CGA we look to the present and the future. Despite the fact that present CBS measures are scientifically unjustified and way exceed any perceived risk, South African DAFF and growers have implemented a risk management system defined as the most comprehensive for any pest/product combination in any country," he said.

"This is borne out by the negligible South African interceptions. We will continue with this risk management system while pursuing a resolution to the scientific dispute."

"During December a Spanish grower union identified their own fruit (after a mislabeling error) as being of poor quality impacting negatively on prices. It would be better for all citrus growers around the world to concentrate on improving quality so that consumers can enjoy year round, excellent tasting fruit."

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