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SA citrus growers say new EU rules are discriminatory

SA is the world's second largest citrus exporter and sold 32% of its oranges to the European market in 2022

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Picture: SUPPLIED

New EU pest control rules will cut SA's orange exports to Europe by 20% in 2023, threatening thousands of jobs, the Citrus Growers Association (CGA) has said.

The new measures imposed by the EU last June require enhanced cold treatment for citrus exports due to concerns over False Codling Moth, a pest commonly found in Sub-Saharan Africa, and Citrus Black Spot.

“Current estimates are that about 20% of oranges produced for Europe will not be shipped this year because of the new regulations,” CGA president Justin Chadwick said in a statement.

“This means that approximately 80,000 tonnes of oranges might not make it to European supermarket shelves,” he said.

SA is the world's second largest citrus exporter after Spain and sold 32% of its oranges into the European market in 2022, according to the country's Perishable Products Export Control Board.

The CGA wants SA to discuss the new pest regulations at a joint meeting of African Union and EU agriculture ministers to be held in Rome on June 30.

Chadwick said the new EU rules, which require all SA oranges destined for Europe to be pre-cooled to below 2°C for 20 days before shipment were “unfair and discriminatory” and would require \$75m investment in new cold storage technology and capacity.

“The CGA remains of the view that the new regulations have no basis in science and prescribes cold treatment that simply isn't warranted,” Chadwick said.

The industry has presented “clear evidence” that its current False Codling Moth risk management system is highly effective and ensures that 99.9% of oranges entering the EU are pest free, he added.

Reduced orange exports into the EU market would result in a R500m loss to growers, who lost R200m when the rules were introduced midway through the 2022 export season, according to the CGA.

Reuters

