


The South African citrus industry is pushing to overcome strict European Union import rules that only allow for a maximum of five citrus black spot (CBS) disease interceptions in a season. 

Citrus Growers Association (CGA) of Southern Africa CEO Justin Chadwick told *www.freshfruitportal.com* exporters would have to be even more vigilant than before as the standard will now be much tougher.

"They are only allowing for a maximum of five detection but there hasn't been a season when we've had less than 12," he said during Fruit Logistica in Berlin.

"We have a raft of challenges to deal with including higher transport costs and the recent wage rise. Black spot has been an issue that we've dealt with for a while, but the new rules are much harder.

"Hopefully it won't come to that though and we can get a better outcome before the season starts."

In a newsletter, Chadwick highlighted that both South African and U.S. scientists have concluded fruit is not a pathway for the introduction of CBS.

"The very recent advancement of Uruguay's imminent access to the USA further isolates the European Food Safety Agency's (EFSA) conclusion on the risk of CBS and the appropriateness of EU measures," he said.

"One would hope that the EU authorities question their reliance on the poor science produced by the EFSA.

"Nevertheless as much as we shake our heads and gnash our teeth at the lack of scientific expertise within EFSA, we have an immediate issue of meeting the EU's unjust requirements."

He said there was a perception in Europe that South Africa did not take the CBS issue seriously, and this view needed to be corrected.

"South African growers spend hundreds of millions of rands on control measures on the farms, in packhouses and in the ports in an endeavour to meet EU requirements.

"Interception rates have decreased from the high levels of the early 2000's. We are the first to admit it is a difficult disease to control, and even more difficult to monitor."

Chadwick pointed out the EU's Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) had visited South Africa on many occasions to inspect CBS measures, and in every case found South Africa had adopted their recommendations and were satisfied with its systems.

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