


South African citrus exporters are looking to expand business away from traditional markets in Europe and the United States.

With looming E.U. concerns over citrus black spot, the South African government expressed interest in forging better trade ties with India and China. 

Agriculture minister Tina Joemat-Pettersson spoke with the Citrus Growers' Association (CGA) and AgriSA in Johannesburg on Friday about expansion into new regions.

"On the part of the ministry ... we've agreed that as government, we will be assisting the citrus industry to deepen market access in the BRICS [Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa] nations, especially with India and China," Joemat-Pettersson said in a government statement.

"When we meet as BRICS agriculture ministers later in the year, we will discuss this further."

The minister emphasized, however, that interest in new markets was not an attempt to replace trade with Europe.

"This is not a replacement of the EU market, but the broadening and expanding of the citrus industry to access the BRICS market as well. The EU and the United States of America remain our traditional markets," she said.

According to *bdlive.co.za*, the first EU interception due to black spot occurred the Sunday following a seemingly successful trade meeting this month between South African and European officials.

A maximum of five interceptions for the fungal disease will be permitted by EU officials, before cutting South Africa off from the market.

CGA's Pieter Nortje told the South African publication that although the first interception came half-way through the season, "we will exceed five interceptions this season."

Last season, he said the nation experienced 39 interceptions in Europe.

CGA president Justin Chadwick took a more positive stance, commending exporters for work well done.

"South African growers and DAFF [Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries] must

be commended for keeping this clean sheet - with just one interception recorded in July (to date). This is particularly commendable given the difficult weather conditions experienced in 2012," Chadwick said in press release.

South Africa ships around 100 million cartons of citrus a year to 45 countries. 45% of the nation's citrus exports go to Europe.

Related story: [South Africa expresses citrus concerns in EU trade talks](#)

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