California Citrus Mutual (CCM) president Joel Nelsen has lamented the trade dispute between the U.S. and China that has seen the latter implement a 15% tariff on numerous horticultural imports.

The tariffs, which apply to a range of U.S. produce items including California citrus, come in retaliation to President Donald Trump's new tariffs on steel and aluminum.

China's Ministry of Finance announced the proposed tariffs on March 23, later confirming they had come into effect on April 2.

"The decision by the Chinese government to levy exorbitant tariff increases on U.S. produce will surely have a direct impact on California citrus producers," Nelsen said.

"Maintaining access to foreign markets and having the ability to compete in a global market place are critical to the success of the citrus industry. The retaliatory tariffs imposed by China hinders our ability to be competitive by increasing costs for Chinese consumers, an important market for California citrus.

"Family farmers in our industry will suffer from the economic fallout unless we can find alternative markets for California's navel and Valencia oranges and lemons."

He went on to say that while the U.S. Government focused on those business sectors requiring attention, China "has chosen to expand the discussion to include the agricultural industry."

"In fact, the Chinese indicated last week in a statement that constructive talks could alleviate the real issues, yet insufficient time was given to accomplish that objective," he said.

"Now Chinese consumers and California citrus producers are innocent parties to a trade debate."

Nelsen, CCM executive vice president Casey Creamer and board chairman Curt Holmes are traveling to Washington D.C. this week for meetings with congress and the U.S. Administration regarding trade and other important issues affecting the California citrus industry.

Photo: www.shutterstock.com

www.freshfruitportal.com