

The South African Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) has clarified that a rule allowing citrus imports from all South African regions into the U.S. is not yet final.



On Monday the organization sent out a notice announcing the publishing of the final rule allowing for the importation of several citrus varieties and hybrids into the continental U.S. from areas of South Africa where citrus black spot (CBS) has been known to occur.

It had said that exports from these areas would start in 2019.

However, on Friday DAFF sent out a further notice to the citrus industry indicating that in fact the U.S. Federal Register document it had been referring to was only an agenda indicating which rules are in the final stage of rulemaking.

In the notice, DAFF indicated that the final rule is expected to become effective in September 2018, according to the Citrus Growers Association of Southern Africa (CGA).

CGA CEO Justin Chadwick said the official announcement of market access approval will be "widely appreciated by those in the industry who have been (im)patiently waiting for the final rule to be published."

At present only growers in the Western and Northern Cape are eligible to ship to the U.S. market, exporting around 150,000 metric tons (MT) annually.

"All industry players understand the importance of taking advantage of this new opportunity in a responsible manner. There are recent examples where access can be short lived if attention is not given to all access conditions and market requirements," Chadwick said.

"The industry will build on the example shown by growers in the Western and Northern Cape, who have nurtured this market, built strong relationships through disciplined

marketing, and paid attention to ensuring quality, phytosanitary, sanitary and market needs are met."

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