MEDIA STATEMENT

07 AUGUST 2013

STATUS OF THE CITRUS PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES RELATING TO THE EUROPEAN UNION

Citrus black spot (CBS) is a progressive disease which occurs in most South African citrus-producing areas. Only the Northern Cape, parts of Western Cape and Free State are free from CBS. Visual detection of the disease is difficult as symptoms (which manifest as superficial blemishes on the fruit) tend to develop over time during storage. CBS is a cosmetic defect and the fruit is entirely suitable and safe for consumption.

South Africa (SA) exports citrus fruit to the European Union (EU) and one of the EU phytosanitary regulations for citrus fruit originating in areas where CBS occurs states that the fruit must have originated in a field of production subjected to appropriate treatments against CBS (all strains pathogenic to citrus), and none of the fruit harvested in the field of production has shown, during an appropriate official examination, symptoms of this organism.

In 2012, the EU announced their intention to institute a five-interception cut-off point for CBS in citrus consignments from SA during the 2013 season. Subsequent to the pronouncement of the stringent measures, SA instituted a revised CBS risk management system and shared this revised system with officials of the EU Directorate General of Health and Consumers’ Commission (SANCO) in a bilateral technical meeting in March 2013. In this meeting, SA also engaged the EU on the five-interception threshold.

The EU remained steadfast in their position on the five-interception threshold, however, the EU agreed to allow South Africa to (additional to the CBS risk management system) declare if, at any stage, the pest status of a farm changes while the citrus fruit is en route to the EU. Such a declaration will not serve as an interception in the EU, but the consignment would not be allowed into the territory of the EU. Since March 2013 to date, SA has managed to export
26 million cartons to the EU and these exports were facilitated mainly because of cooperation among the stakeholders in ensuring the implementation of the CBS risk management system. To date, there has only been one formal notification of CBS interception of a consignment *en route* to the Netherlands. The interception was received on 21 July 2013. The production unit from which the fruit originated has now been deregistered and is not eligible for further exports to the EU.

SA is committed to full compliance to the current EU phytosanitary regulations with respect to CBS. The implementation of the CBS risk management system and the shared responsibility among all stakeholders remain critical for managing SA citrus exports to the EU.

Furthermore, SA is pursuing all available avenues to engage with the EU on the EU's regulations on CBS, including providing comments on the European Food Safety Authority’s CBS Pest Risk Assessment that was published by the EU for public comment on 31 July 2013.

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