

RSA citrus exports to EU increase

South Africa's citrus exports to the European Union (EU) increased by 9% in value last year despite having been hit by the troublesome citrus black spot fungus (CBS), said EU ambassador to South Africa Roeland van de Geer.

EU and South African scientists are still arguing over whether or not CBS could infect European citrus plants, he told journalists. But in the meantime, the exports from South Africa continue, though under strict controls to prevent fruit with the black spot on its skin, entering the EU market

EU officials said South African citrus growers had themselves decided to stop citrus exports to EU near the end of last year's season, because too many CBS-infected fruits bound for export were being discovered.

So the volume of exports had dropped slightly but the monetary valued had increased by about 9 percent because of higher prices in Europe.

After the citrus industry had stopped exporting from CBS affected areas, it improved its system for weeding out CBS-infected fruit. A team from the EU's Food and Veterinary Office had recently visited South Africa and concluded that South Africa's measures complied with EU legislation.

More than 34% of South Africa's citrus is exported to the EU and 40% of all citrus consumed in the EU in winter was imported from South Africa.

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