

The CGA visited Brussels between 20 and 24 March 2016.

The shocking events in Brussels on the 22nd March was a stark reminder of the disregard for human life and the European values that's held and fostered in some fanatical circles. The hearts and prayers of the entire SA Citrus Industry is with the victims and their families. We sincerely hope for a speedy recovery to all the injured and the victim's families find consolation in the weeks to follow.

The visit to Brussels was to engage with all stakeholders and the EU Commission in particular on the SA Industry plans for 2016. It was also used to take stock of the SA performance on CBS over the past few seasons and gauge the developments and sentiments in Europe.

Its suffice to say that the SA count on CBS, that reduced from 35 [in 2013], 28 [in 2014] to 15 [in 2015] were unilaterally applauded as a job well done.

SA has continuously acknowledged its responsibility to work within the current EU framework and show responsible mitigation of the CBS risk posed. Over the past 3 years the Growers, Exporters, DAFF with PPECB worked and reworked the SA Risk Management System [RMS] to strengthen its effectivity and the positive trend of results over this time demonstrate that. This comes at a bold R1 billion in opportunity cost for the SA citrus industry – again underscoring compliance on a vector, regardless of world science underscoring it does not pose a risk to Europe.

The CGA growers has further demonstrated their responsible demeanor by exceeding requirements in the RMS and taking bold decisions to stop commodities or suspend exports when it viewed this to be required.

All the above was conveyed to the EU Commission & stakeholders in Europe while SA undertook to continue on this path during 2016.

The Citrus Industry also thanked the Member States and their inspection services for their cooperation and assistance in 2015. This amongst other by giving full access to each CBS interception dossier and the viability tests conducted on these CBS Interceptions.

This allowed SA to diligently analyze each case and improve the SA RMS. The visits to Member States' laboratories by a SA technical delegation under the competent leadership of DAFF during 2015 further enhanced confidence on both sides.

In the same spirit the SA Citrus Industry have again decided to announce a decision today that marks that core of responsible conduct from our SA grower fraternity.

Following internal analysis, studies and reflection on the 2015 interceptions on organic citrus, the responsible group of organic citrus growers of SA [in the non CBS free areas] has after consultation with the CGA, voluntarily decided to suspend exports of organic lemons to the EU for the 2016 season.

This will allow them to further work on risk mitigating measures of CBS in their product range, while significantly reducing the risk of SA CBS interceptions in Europe during 2016. This will have huge financial consequences on these growers but are a sign of their resolve for the long term welfare of the citrus industry in SA.

This decision was strongly supported by all stakeholders in SA and applauded for its long term sustainability drive and focus of the SA citrus Industry at large.

DAFF has been informed of the decision and along with the RMS 2016, just released by DAFF after extensive review with the citrus industry, will again form the strong basis of the 2016 citrus program to Europe.

SA is confident that all these measures will once again result in Europe experiencing SA citrus during 2016 for its most well-known characteristics namely quality fruit of superior taste and supporting a healthy lifestyle.

Source : <http://www.csif.eu/sites/fr/espace-adherents/index.html>