

Botswana bans fresh produce imports from SA over fruit fly outbreak

Botswana announced this week that it has partially banned fruits and vegetable from South Africa following an outbreak of Asian fruit fly (*Bactrocera dorsalis*).

Chief Agricultural Information & Public Relations Officer in the Ministry of Agriculture, Boikhutso Rabasha, informed traders and the public that all fruit and vegetable imports from South Africa, which are attacked by the Asian fruit fly shall be sourced from Eastern and Western Cape only.

“This takes effect immediately. All permits, which were issued before the 5th March 2019 have been revoked and therefore no longer valid. Traders and the general public are advised to apply for new permits and are kindly requested to cooperate,” she said.

Rebasha explained that the fruit fly in Botswana is a pest of economic importance, which is extremely difficult to eradicate or control and a threat to the entire horticultural industry. The Asian fruit fly attacks and damages tomatoes, citrus fruits, cucumber, mango, cashew nuts, guava, green pepper, watermelons, squash, pumpkins, butternuts, banana, avocado and several wild host plants.

Botswana is largely dependent on South Africa for fruit and vegetables. Observers are of the view that the ban on imports will likely cause a shortage of fruit and vegetables in the country, as local produce would not meet the nation’s demands.

Reports indicate that the country spends over US\$23.7 million per annum importing 34,000 tonnes of fruit and vegetables to supplement the 41,000 tonnes produced locally.

The national requirement for fruit and vegetables is 75,000 tonnes. According to the ministry of agriculture, Botswana is not yet self-sufficient in fruit and vegetable production but mostly imports the shortfall from South Africa.

The length and extent of the ban were not made immediately clear. Restrictions were expected to continue until the outbreak in South Africa has been brought under control.

The government’s decision to ban a number of imported crops such as tomatoes, potatoes, peppers and beetroot has triggered price increases and a shortage of commodities.



The ban is not only threatening supplies of these basic commodities in the local retail market but also pushing up prices.

The last time Botswana reported cases of Asian fruit fly outbreak was in 2013 when the pest invaded hundreds of farms in the northern part of the country.

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