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MEDIA STATEMENT

SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT MANAGED TO NEGOTIATE A SETTLEMENT WITH THE EUROPEAN UNION (EU) TO CLEAR CITRUS BLOCKED IN THE EU PORTS

11 AUGUST 2022

The Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) confirms that it has managed to negotiate a settlement that will see clearing of citrus containers stuck in ports of entry in the European Union (EU).

To date we have managed to clear more 300 of the 509 containers and we are processing clearance of the remaining containers.

The EU introduced new measures to regulate risk associated with False Codling Moth (FCM) on citrus fruit. The new measures include amended additional phytosanitary declarations for grapefruit and soft citrus and revised cold treatment regime for oranges.

The measures were published on 21 June 2022 and were set to come into force by 24 June 2022.

This implied that consignments arriving in Europe from 14 July onwards needed to comply with the new measures. Taking the shortest sailing time to the EU, it meant that consignments that left South Africa on 24 June 2022, three days from the publication should have been certified on the new measures.

The DALRRD did explain to the European Commission (EC) in a meeting and through written communication that the date was unreasonable. At the time of the publication of the new measures, there were consignments that were certified and had already left for EU as well as some that were in the process of being exported. The DALRRD assertions were that changing the inspection and certification system within three days were unrealistic.

The reasonable date relating to compliance with new measures would have been for consignments leaving SA on 9 July 2022, considering required adjustments of systems and communication to the different regulatory sites, which required at least three weeks from publication.

However, the EC insisted on the 14th July 2022 as an implementation date. As anticipated, the DALRRD started receiving queries from exporters after the implementation date regarding rejection of consignments in the EU ports.



The EU authorities needed phytosanitary certificates compliant to the new FCM measures. The DALRRD segmented the cases into just documentation regarding grapefruit and soft citrus and cold treatment compliance on oranges.

The impasse was subsequently addressed through replacing phytosanitary certificates with the correct additional declarations starting from 22 July 2022. The orange cases were still an issue until the industry in a meeting on 25 July 2022 presented to the DALRRD possible equivalence measures regarding treatment applied on these consignments under South Africa's Systems Approach for FCM.

The DALRRD committed to negotiate with the EU through the relevant National Plant Protection Organisations (NPPOs) that they should consider these equivalent measures.

The first official letter was sent to the Netherlands NPPO on 27 July 2022 and a positive response was received on 28 July 2022. It based on this agreement that an arrangement was struck that replacement phytosanitary certificates will be issued for oranges with equivalent cold treatment declaration. Issuance of replacement phytosanitary certificates for oranges started on Monday, 1 August 2022.

In a meeting with industry on 3 August 2022 the DALRRD agreed to include other ports of entry after receiving yet another positive response from Italy on equivalent cold treatment declaration. The ports that were presented by industry as those where South African oranges were rejected included ports in Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden.

Over 2 000 containers, at an estimated valued at R 500 million were affected by this blockage.

So far, the department, with information being submitted by industry is re-certifying orange consignments blocked in the Netherlands and Italian ports and we are receiving confirmation that the containers are being cleared.

Furthermore, the DALRRD held the meeting with the EC on 5 August 2022 regarding the handling of the non-compliant consignment at the ports of the EU and agreed on the interim measures, namely that the EU acceded to the DALRRD's application to complete the cooling period in the EU.

The interim measures provide that the consignments be treated at the cold treatment facilities in the EU and the department to notify other EU member states.

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Issued by the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development:

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