

Government pledges to support fruit-exporting sector

The South African government has pledged its support to the country's fruit-exporting sector that is currently trading to the US and those seeking opportunities to do so.



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This commitment was made on behalf of government by agriculture, forestry and fisheries (DAFF) minister Senzeni Zokwana during a Produce Marketing Association (PMA) Fresh Fruit Summit 2018, held at the Orange County Convention Centre in Orlando, USA over the weekend.

The annual summit brings more than 20,000 participants throughout the global fresh produce and floral supply chains, who come together as a community to learn, network, build relationships and do business.

Speaking at the official opening of the summit, Zokwana announced that current negotiations are in the final stages for extended access to citrus, as well as for avocados to the US. He said that the US has applied for access of apples and berries to the South African market.

“These interventions only present a path for industry to utilise emerging opportunities for trade,” Zokwana said.

The minister said that the South African government promotes and supports growth in exports to increase foreign earnings which will stimulate the agricultural commercial sector to grow, create opportunities for small and emerging growers and

exporters, and create jobs.

“All of this is necessary to eradicate the triple ills of poverty, inequality and unemployment, and to bring about a prosperous sector and more equal society in South Africa,” Zokwana said.

Over two million tonnes of fruit exported

South Africa exports 2.7 million tonnes of fresh fruit per year to about 100 countries to the value of \$3.4bn.

Although only 4% of that volume is currently being exported to the US, Zokwana said it is envisaged that the figure will grow substantially due to the following:

- The recently awarded access for SA litchis to the US;
- The eminent wider access for SA citrus fruit to the US (currently, SA can only export citrus from the Western Cape province to the US);
- The potential market access for SA avocados to the US; and
- The potential import of SA table grapes, pears and apples through the Port of Virginia.

Zokwana said that the DAFF also has a very good and long standing working relationship with United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services (APHIS).

Increase fruit exports

He said that through engagements with APHIS, South Africa intends to increase in volumes of fruit exported.

“The government of South Africa is fully committed to supporting and sustaining a world-class supply chain system for the South African fresh produce and perishables sector. This can only be achieved by good relations with strategic partners which includes the USA.

“As counter seasonal producers, there is a potential good match in fresh produce trade between South Africa and the United States. Especially, the South African fruit industry has a highly sophisticated supply chain that exports to sophisticated markets all over the world including the USA, the European Union and China,” the minister said.

The minister added that South Africa is promoting diversity of fruit exports including the new consignments of berries recently exported to the US.

However, he noted that the US market is a relative newcomer to South Africa’s country client base, due to historic sanctions in the apartheid days.

“Through hard work on both sides, substantially more fruit could be traded between South Africa and the USA. The USA remains a priority market for us.”

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