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Department:  
Trade, Industry and Competition  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

## THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

### QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY

#### QUESTION NO. 607

**Mr W M Douglas (MK) to ask the Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition:**  
***[Interdepartmentally transferred from International Relations and Cooperation with effect Friday, 14 March 2024]: [\*34] [Question submitted for oral reply now placed for written reply because it is more than quota (Rule 137(8))]***

Whether, with reference to his department's 2024-25 Annual Performance Plan that states that Government hoped that issues that currently impact trade partnership of the Republic and the European Union (EU) on the growth of the partnership, such as those concerning citrus and other sanitary and phytosanitary barriers to trade imposed by the EU on South African agriculture products will be resolved in the near future, and noting that the phytosanitary barriers affect the Republic's exports under the guise of plant health concerns that resulted in the Republic formally launching dispute settlement proceedings in 2022 at the World Trade Organisation over the EU's unjustified restrictions on citrus exports, the Government has taken any steps at a diplomatic level to challenge the specified trade restrictions, which clearly serve as overt protectionist measures for EU farmers rather than scientifically justified safety standards; if not, why not; if so, what are the full details of the diplomatic steps taken by the Government? NW640E

#### REPLY:

Since 1992 the European Union (EU) has implemented several phytosanitary measures against South African exports, relating to Citrus Black Spot (CBS). In 1992 the EU banned importation of citrus fruit from CBS-affected areas in SA. Subsequently, protocols were

developed under which SA could export. However, the measures to be complied with have become stricter and costlier over time.

Over the years, SA has engaged the EU through many bilateral engagements, up to ministerial level. These included, amongst others:

- In 2010, referred the dispute for resolution to the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), under its Expert Committee procedure.
- The IPPC process has since stalled as a result of the EU's stonewalling and or delaying tactics.
- On several occasions through the Trade Cooperation Committee with the European Commission.
- Discussed as part of a package of trade concerns from both sides, on 9-10 October 2018 in Pretoria.
- Discussed during the EU-SA Summit in Brussels on 15 November 2018.
- EU-SADC EPA Joint Council meeting, which took place on 19 February 2019 in Cape Town.

South Africa has repeatedly tried to resolve the matter through these bilateral engagements with the EU, without success. In line with the procedures in the WTO dispute system, South Africa has undertaken further consultations with the EU with the view to find an amicable solution. However, these consultations did not assist to find a resolution, that left South Africa with no option but to request the establishment of a Panel.

South Africa is therefore, exercising the rights provided for in the WTO Dispute Settlement Understanding by lodging disputes at the WTO against the EU on the unnecessary and unjustified Citrus Black Spot and False Codling Moth regulations.

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