

Russia a major destination for SA fresh produce exports

Russia continues to be an important market for South African fresh produce, says the Fresh Produce Exporters' Forum (FPEF).



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“Russia continues to be an important market for us, as 10% out of 2.7 million tonnes of fresh fruit exported from South Africa goes to Russia,” said the forum’s CEO, Anton Kruger, on Wednesday.

Kruger is part of the Department of Trade and Industry’s (dti) delegation that is participating in the World Food Moscow trade fair, which got underway on Monday in the Russian capital.

The dti-led delegation of businesspeople forms part of the department’s efforts to promote South Africa’s agro-processing industry in order to consolidate and establish market presence of local goods in Russia.

Kruger said the South African pavilion at the fair adds value for the FPEF, which is a voluntary, non-profit organisation with more than 130 members, accounting for about 90% of fresh produce exported from South Africa.

Kruger, who also represents the Export Council for the Fresh Produce Industry in South Africa, said since 2017, they have seen a steady export growth in pears, apples and table grapes, although the bulk of exports is still citrus.

He said the council is engaging with the Russian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and is addressing the labelling issue. This follows the decision by the Euro Agent Commission to introduce new labelling requirements. The decision added a lot of cost and additional efforts for South Africa to export its fresh produce.

Kruger said while 10% out of 2.7 million tonnes of fresh fruit is exported from South Africa to Russian, this took a dip in 2016 to around 6% as a result of the labelling requirements.

He said since 2017, the volumes have picked up again to 10%.

“We are working towards Russia accepting South Africa’s electronic digital barcoded certificates, which is what we are aiming for for our members. There will be another meeting with the Russian Custom Authority to address that.”

He noted that there is potential for South African grown avocados to be exported to Russia. “We noticed that there is a big opportunity for us to introduce avocados and test the Russian market,” said Kruger.

Meanwhile, export sales generated from South Africa’s participation in last year’s fair amounted to R56 million.

South Africa’s exports to Russia increased from R4.1 billion in 2016 to more than R4.7 billion in 2017. Major South African exports include edible fruits and nuts, manganese ores, products of iron and steel, beverages, spirits and vinegar, vehicles, electrical machinery and equipment.

The annual World Food Moscow last year hosted 1 433 exhibitors from 65 countries specialising in food and beverage products, with 78% of the exhibitors reporting that they had return of investment from exhibiting at the show.

The fair will conclude on Thursday.

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