

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001568/25
to the Commission
Fabio De Masi (NI)
(17 April 2025)**

Subject: EU phytosanitary trade regulations on citrus black spot (CBS) and WTO dispute with South Africa

South Africa has initiated a WTO dispute settlement procedure in relation to the EU's phytosanitary trade regulations regarding CBS. South Africa claims these regulations were primarily intended to shield Spanish and Portuguese producers of citrus fruits from South African competition. While the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) argued in 2013 that CBS could spread to citrus farms in the EU, scientists from Brazil, Argentina, the US, Uruguay, Australia and South Africa have challenged this assessment. South African producers point out that they have exported citrus fruits to the EU for over 110 years without a single case of CBS transmission, and argue that CBS would be a purely cosmetic issue, affecting only a very small proportion of exported fruit and unable to spread via fruit to other climatic zones.

Has EFSA submitted any new studies or findings to the WTO since 2013 to support the EU's position and the 2013 assessment? If so, what information has been communicated?

Submitted: 17.4.2025

**Answer given by Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission
(30 July 2025)**

The conclusion that there is a risk from the introduction of *Phyllosticta citricarpa* into the EU territory and the contribution of citrus fruits in the spread of the pest is based on the opinion of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) of 2014 ⁽¹⁾.

Subsequent scientific publications ⁽²⁾ complement EFSA's scientific opinion. Those subsequent scientific publications did not provide evidence that would lead to a modification of EFSA's conclusions as regards the contribution of the citrus fruits to the spread of the pest through trade.

EFSA's scientific opinions are normally submitted to the World Trade Organisation by the interested parties as part of litigation proceedings and also referenced, when necessary, in the Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary measures.

⁽¹⁾ <https://efsa.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.2903/j.efsa.2014.3557> (EFSA Journal 2014;12(2):3557, 243 pp. doi:10.2903/j.efsa.2014.3557).

⁽²⁾ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/supporting/pub/en-555> (EFSA supporting publication 2014:EN-555. 195 pp.).
<https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/4513> (EFSA Journal 2016;14(6):4513, 53 pp. doi:10.2903/j.efsa.2016.4513).
<https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/5114> (EFSA Journal 2018;16(1):5114, 48 pp. doi: <https://doi.org/10.2903/j.efsa.2018.5114>);
<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-022-22775-z>. Geographic distribution, prevalence, and incidence of citrus black spot caused by *Phyllosticta citricarpa* in Tunisia;
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/379427720_Geographic_distribution_prevalence_and_incidence_of_citrus_black_spot_caused_by_Phyllosticta_citricarpa_in_Tunisia; <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1878614624000497>.