

# SA gets tough on fruit imports

The Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries says no fruit will be brought into South Africa from other countries without a phytosanitary import permit.



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This follows new detections of the invader fruit fly, *Bactrocera invadens*, in the far northern part of Limpopo as well as in the eastern part of the country.

The Departmental Acting Chief Director: Stakeholder Relations and Communication, Steve Galane, said in 2010 and 2011, several isolated incursions of *Bactrocera invadens* were detected in the northern parts of the country and all of these incursions were successfully eradicated.

"No person may move fruit from an infested area to a non-infested area without a permit. Failure to effectively control fly populations may lead to the dispersal of the pest from the affected areas to other unaffected production areas.

"It is of utmost importance that no fruit is brought into South Africa from any country without a phytosanitary import permit," he said.

In Limpopo, the affected areas are along the Limpopo River to the border town of Musina, Tshipise, Nwanedi, Levubu, Witlag and Thohoyandou, while the affected areas on the eastern area are Deerpark, Letsitele, Hoedspruit, Burgersfort, Mbombela, Malelane and Komatipoort.

Galane said the areas surrounding Tshidzini village, Beitbridge, Witlag, Tshipise and Komatipoort were still under quarantine.

He said the pest was currently present only in the Vhembe District in the Limpopo and subject to official control that may include eradication or classification of such regions as areas of low pest prevalence.

The fruit fly is an invasive species with a wide range of hosts and it causes severe damage to its host plants.

The hosts include commercial fruit types such as mango, citrus, guava, papaya and bananas, wild fruit such as Marula and wild figs, as well as "vegetables" such as bell peppers, pumpkin and tomatoes.

It has spread across Sub-Saharan Africa after being detected in Kenya in 2003 and currently occurs in many African countries, including Angola, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Malawi and Zambia, Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia and Zimbabwe.

According to Galane, the department will be investing in further resources, such as agricultural chemicals (approximately R10 million) and preventative steps.

The control of *B. invadens* is made possible through a combination of cultural and chemical control methods.

"All land users and landowners, including villagers and producers, are required to apply good agricultural practices and are therefore urgently requested to ensure that all fruit that has dropped and has rotted, or will not be used or sold, is buried and covered with half a metre of soil.

"Alternatively, if it is not possible to bury discarded fruit, such fruit should be placed into a strong, undamaged refuse bag, which must be securely closed to prevent the pest from escaping. The bag should be placed in the sun," Galane said.

Chemical control is achieved through a combination of air, ground applied bait sprays and or bait stations and ground applied Male Annihilation Treatments (MAT).

Monitoring for *B. invadens* continues through a network of traps with specific lures to determine the presence and success of the control measures.

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