

## No more 'French' fries - industry appeals for local support

In South Africa, the local French fry market is under attack by the importation of French fries from Europe, putting about 100 of the 650 commercial potato farmers, which produce potatoes under contract for the processing industry, at risk.



"Total local annual production of French fries is estimated at around 120,000 tons. However, the actual market size is close to 150,000 tons. The 2010 level of French fry imports equates to 82,000 tons of locally produced (raw) potatoes, as replaced by these imports. In real terms, close to a third of French fries consumed locally," explains Potatoes South Africa (PSA) marketing manager, Etienne Booyens.

PSA has recently turned to the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries, as well as the Minister of Trade & Industry, in order to address the influx of frozen French fries into South Africa.

The local potato processing industry finds itself in a crisis, to a sharp increase in the importation of frozen French fries, from Europe. With every role player in the potato value chain adversely affected, PSA is appealing to government for urgent intervention in creating a sustainable environment for the potato processing industry.

The volume of frozen French fry imports has surged from a level of 15,460 tons in 2009; peaking during 2010 at 46,903 tons, and then levelling at 30,054 tons last year.

The usage of locally produced potatoes for manufacturing processed potato products is estimated at 435,000 tons, of which 58% is used for producing French fries. "With a labour multiplier of close to 1.2 workers per hectare, and over 9500 hectares planted for the processing industry; we are looking at more than 11,400 workers being affected."

The three largest producers of frozen French fries in South Africa jointly employ approximately 1060 workers in their factories alone. "Furthermore, it is of paramount importance that the internal, as well as external jobs created by the industry, are also taken into serious consideration."

Due to the prevailing threat to the sustainability of the local French fry industry, PSA urges all South African consumers to join its fight and lobby against the importation of frozen French fries.

"South Africans understand that local is lekker, so the next time you dine at a quick service restaurant, please ask: 'Are these French fries manufactured from SA potatoes?' By consumers adding their voices, we may be able to prevent the collapse of the local potato processing industry," concludes Booyens.

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