South African fruit delegation last week visited China's General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine (AQSIQ) to negotiate market access for apple imports, as well as improving the entry protocol for citrus.

South African citrus is currently required to undergo cold sterilisation treatment.

Citrus exports totalled 87.7m 15kg cartons packed and 86.1m shipped for the first 37 weeks of 2012. This has been superseded in 2013, with 98.8m 15kg cartons packed and 87.3m shipped.

Writing in its weekly newsletter, Citrus Growers’ Association (CGA) of Southern Africa CEO Justin Chadwick praised AQSIQ officials for their willingness to discuss alternative protocols, provided that adequate evidence could be provided to satisfy concerns regarding pests.

However, Chadwick added that their current workload meant AQSIQ officials would not be freed up to address these issues until next year’s season.

The meetings resulted in a proposal that a technical work group be formed to take matters of mutual benefit and interest forward.

The delegation also visited Beijing Xinfadi Agricultural Products Wholesale Market, with Chadwick describing the market as a "hive of activity" during the visit. "There was plenty of South African citrus in the coldstores; vendors claiming that South African citrus was good quality and reasonably-priced," he said. "Most of the fruit had been trucked from Guangzhou, with some coming in from Shanghai."