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By Nina Pullman

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Ethiopian veg exports halted after farms attacked



Exotic veg supply from Ethiopia is disrupted

Some Dutch firms have had to halt imports from Ethiopia after protesters burnt packhouses and damaged land

Dutch suppliers have halted imports and production at their Ethiopian operations after damage to facilities and land by anti-government protesters.

Prices have spiked in the Netherlands for products such as fine beans and exotic vegetables due to the disruption in Ethiopian supply, with Kenya and Zimbabwe helping to fill the immediate sourcing gap.

Firms located in the Oromiya region, close to Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa, are among those targeted, as part of a wave of unrest in the region over the past few months. It is thought that the increasingly violent protests have been sparked in response to government plans to change boundaries.

FV SeleQt director Bas Rensen told FPJ around 20 international firms have been affected, with a vegetable grower and packer for the company having halted production and exports a week ago after being attacked. Reuters reported that

Dutch juice firm africaJUICE in Oromiya, flower grower Esmeralda Farms and Indian company Fontana Flowers in the Amhara region, have also been affected.

"We need to wait before we know what the actual damage is, but initial pictures have shown they burnt the packhouse. Deliveries have stopped and the whole project is on hold," Rensen told FPJ.

To fill the immediate supply gap on products such as fine beans, peas and exotic vegetables, FV SeleQt has turned to Kenya and Zimbabwe, with the Guatemalan season about to begin. At this time of year, Ethiopia usually accounts for between five and 10 per cent of the company's fine bean and exotic veg supply.

Prices have already gone up at auctions in the Netherlands as a result of the disruption, Rensen continued, and FV SeleQt has had to organise last-minute plantings in Kenya and Guatemala to cover supply for the Christmas production.

"There are security issues on the roads and at the site, so we have not sent any manager or director there yet. We are in contact with the Ethiopian government to ask for security support, and they are doing everything they can.

"What we now need to do is see if we will continue our commercial operations in Ethiopia," he said. "The last couple of days seems to have been quieter, but it is unknown at the moment."

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