South African citrus exports expected at 210–215 million cartons in 2026

South Africa's citrus industry is preparing for the 2026 export season, with the Citrus Growers' Association of Southern Africa (CGA) releasing its initial export estimates. The figures indicate continued growth, with total exports across all varieties expected to rise by around 3% to 5% to between 210 and 215 million 15kg cartons, including late mandarins.

The CGA noted that the season will be shaped by external factors, including global instability affecting demand, shipping, fuel availability, and input costs. At the same time, the organisation continues to monitor volumes and support logistics planning to maintain supply flows.

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Lemon exports are forecast at 45.9 million 15kg cartons, up 10% from last year's 41.6 million cartons, supported by young orchards entering production in the Sundays River Valley and recovery in the Senwes region.

Navel orange exports are estimated at 30 million 15kg cartons, down 5% from 2025 but still above 2024 levels. The category includes 13.4 million cartons of Early and Midseason Navels and 16.6 million cartons of Late Navels.

Valencia oranges are projected at 63 million 15kg cartons, a 1.6% increase year on year. Production is expected to normalise following strong volumes last season, with regional variation. Northern areas are forecast to increase output, while the Eastern and Western Cape expect lower production due to drier conditions and alternate bearing. Additional volumes are also coming from Zimbabwe, Botswana, and Mozambique.

Grapefruit exports are estimated at 15.7 million 17kg cartons, up 16% from last year, supported by growing conditions, although fruit size is reported to be smaller, and early harvesting has been affected by wet weather in northern regions.

Early mandarin volumes show mixed trends. Satsumas are expected at around 1.5 million 15kg cartons, in line with 2024. Novas are forecast to decline by 3% to 5% to 5.6 million cartons, while Clementines are expected to fall by 4% to 6.2 million cartons. Estimates for late mandarins will follow later in the season.

The industry continues to highlight the need for improved market access, particularly to China, India, and the U.S., as well as more efficient logistics, including rail infrastructure. The citrus sector employs around 140,000 people and remains the country's largest agricultural export industry, with further growth expected to support rural economies.

For more information:
Citrus Growers' Association
Tel: +27 (0) 31 765 2514
Email: info@cga.co.za
www.cga.co.za (https://www.cga.co.za/)
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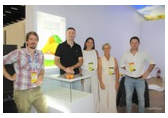

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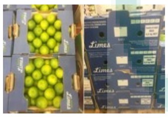

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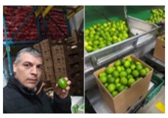

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