

South Africa updates citrus export rules to China

Agriculture Minister John Steenhuisen has welcomed the amendment of cold treatment requirements regulating the export of South African citrus to the People's Republic of China. He said the change supports trade opportunities and builds on the existing partnership.

Steenhuisen stated that the amendment will strengthen South Africa's position as a leading citrus exporter to China. According to the Minister, the revised treatment options are expected to improve export processes, lower costs for producers and exporters, and support the delivery of high-quality fruit to the Chinese market.

"In practical terms, this will help South African citrus continue to grow its presence in a market that is both dynamic and increasingly important to our agricultural sector," the Minister said.

China remains a key agricultural trading partner. In 2025, exports of citrus to China and Hong Kong reached approximately 11.5 million cartons, representing around 6 per cent of total citrus exports.

Steenhuisen noted that this development follows other market access gains, including the opening of the Chinese market to South African stone fruit such as apricots, peaches, nectarines, plums, and prunes. He said these developments continue to create opportunities for growers and exporters.

"South Africa places a high value on its relationship with China, which continues to create meaningful opportunities across our agricultural sector. These agreements are the result of trust, respect, and sustained cooperation, and they are helping open doors for our producers at a time when diversification has never been more important," Steenhuisen said.

South Africa supports China's One China Policy, which recognises the government of the People's Republic of China as the sole authority representing China. The Minister said this provides a basis for cooperation between the two countries.

"For the agricultural sector, this certainty translates into smoother negotiations on export protocols, faster resolution of phytosanitary issues, and expanded opportunities for South African products to enter and grow in the Chinese market.

"More broadly, it strengthens investor confidence, supports trade growth, and helps unlock logistics and infrastructure partnerships, all of which are critical to driving economic growth, job creation, and long-term food security in South Africa," the Minister said.

The citrus sector remains a key contributor to South Africa's agricultural output. In 2025, Southern Africa exported approximately 204 million cartons of citrus, with South Africa accounting for around 193 million cartons. Export earnings exceeded US\$2 billion for the first time, reaching an estimated US\$2.47 billion.

The sector supports around 140,000 direct jobs at the farm and packhouse level, with additional employment across logistics, export services, and distribution.

Steenhuisen said the government will continue working with industry stakeholders, including the Citrus Growers' Association of Southern Africa, to support trade, maintain phytosanitary standards, and develop export markets.

"This is the kind of progress we are working to replicate across the sector – strong partnerships, growing markets, and real opportunities flowing back to farmers and rural communities," Steenhuisen said.

Source: SA News (<https://www.sanews.gov.za/south-africa/steenhuisen-hails-amendment-citrus-export-china>)

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