South African citrus exports projected at 215 million cartons

South Africa's citrus industry is projecting exports of up to 215 million cartons for the current season, compared to 203.4 million cartons in 2025, according to Citrus Growers' Association CEO Dr Boitshoko Ntshabele.

"The projection is largely driven by exceptional growing conditions and new plantings coming into fruit," he said, noting that La Niña conditions had mixed effects. "We saw some rainfall delay the picking of fruit in the northern regions, but it did not affect the fruit itself."

On logistics, Ntshabele said port performance improved during the 2025 season. "The 2025 season saw improved port performance, and Transnet deserves credit for the effort put into increasing efficiency." He added that the current season will include the first use of the Durban Gateway Terminal at the Port of Durban, part of a joint venture between Transnet and International Container Terminal Services Inc.

Geopolitical conditions remain a concern for exporters. "Currently, we have not seen diversions of Middle East volumes in any significant way. However, we expect the war to have some impact on demand, although the extent remains uncertain," he said. Around 19 per cent of exports are typically shipped to the region.

Efforts to expand market access continue, including engagement with China and potential developments such as a new in-transit cold treatment protocol for India and amendments to existing protocols with China.

Input costs remain a constraint. "Higher diesel, fertiliser, and shipping costs will most likely have an impact this season," Ntshabele said. He added that fuel costs remain a key factor, with most citrus transported to ports by truck. "Ninety-five percent of our citrus is moved to ports by trucks, and fuel costs will bite."

He said expanded freight rail capacity is required, particularly for smaller producers. "Private-sector involvement in rail is progressing, but it needs to happen at a much greater scale and a much faster pace."

The industry is focusing on market coordination and information flow. "The CGA remains focused on aspects within its direct control, including ensuring growers have rapid access to market intelligence to guide fruit to markets in a predictable and stable manner," Ntshabele said.

According to the National Agricultural Marketing Council, the citrus sector generated at least R40 billion (US$2.1 billion) in export revenue in 2025. The industry supports rural livelihoods, particularly in the Eastern Cape and Limpopo, although reliance on a limited number of export markets remains a risk.

Source: Farmer's Weekly (https://www.farmersweekly.co.za/agri-news/south-africa/favourable-conditions-drive-citrus-export-growth/)
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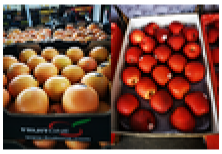

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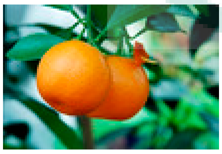

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