

South African citrus shipments to Middle East continue despite delays

South Africa's citrus season is gaining momentum, with fruit now flowing steadily to markets in the Middle East. Current pressures on exporters are limited to slightly longer transit times and higher shipping costs, with no diversion of volumes to alternative markets.

"Early consignments have already arrived in Middle Eastern markets, taking somewhat longer to reach destination due to adjusted shipping routes, but all feedback indicates that quality is holding up well," said Dr Boitshoko Ntshabele, CEO of the Citrus Growers' Association of Southern Africa (CGA).

Demand in Middle Eastern markets remains in line with expectations, and South African suppliers continue to prioritise these customers.



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Shipping lines are accepting container bookings and transporting cargo via alternative routes following the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. These routes involve longer shipment times and higher costs, but still provide access to Middle Eastern ports.

Based on current information, industry stakeholders aim to supply the Middle East and other markets largely in line with original targets set at the start of the year.

The CGA notes that the situation remains fluid and could change as the season progresses. Logistics, transit times, costs, and market dynamics are being closely monitored, along with global supply developments to the Middle East.

The association has invested in data and market intelligence capacity, as well as monitoring and review forums, to support logistics planning across the supply chain.

The South African citrus export industry remains in close contact with buyers and will adjust to changes in demand if required.

"While conditions may evolve, South Africa's position for now is clear: fruit destined for the Middle East is being shipped to the Middle East, and supply to these customers remains a priority unless the situation alters dramatically," concluded Dr Ntshabele.

The Middle Eastern market typically accounts for 19% of South Africa's total citrus exports.

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