

IMPORTS AND EXPORTS

Valencia exports surge to record volumes

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Source: Specialty Produce

Southern Africa's Valencia orange crop exceeded initial expectations, resulting in a significantly larger volume that boosted exports but strained market and logistics systems in 2025.

This is according to Citrus Growers' Association of Southern Africa (CGA) CEO Boitshoko Ntshabele, who reported in his latest newsletter that the Valencia crop had performed strongly due to favourable agronomic conditions and packing decisions.

The Valencia forms the backbone of the region's orange season and accounts for the majority of total citrus production in the region.

"The initial estimate was 52 million cartons. As the season progressed, regional reports highlighted favourable agronomic conditions and strategic packing decisions that pointed toward a larger-than-expected crop," Ntshabele said.

Key regions that contributed to higher volumes included the Limpopo River area, which reported good fruit size and colour, while Letsitele, the

largest producing region, saw early colour development, enabling a faster packing start than previous years.

Botswana has also packed its first commercial Valencia crop.

Ntshabele said a high volume of Class 2 and industrial (PP-grade) fruit had been packed for export.

"The Eastern Cape and Western Cape delivered record volumes under favourable conditions, with PP fruit ultimately accounting for 12% of total Valencia volumes," he said.

The estimate increased steadily during harvest, mirroring the navel season trend and confirming a much larger crop than anticipated.

Export markets absorbed the surge. Europe remained the top destination, receiving 20 million cartons.

"Exports to the Middle East rose sharply – from 6.9 million to 10.4 million cartons – while shipments to Russia increased to 5.7 million cartons," Ntshabele said.

Asia also grew significantly, reaching 6.1 million cartons from 3.8 million the prior season.

"The 2025 season ultimately confirmed a substantial increase in the Valencia crop, driven by excellent growing conditions and strong pack-outs," he said.

"This surge in volume, however, placed considerable pressure on both the market and logistical infrastructure throughout the export period."

Valencia exports were recorded at around 61.7-61.8 million cartons (15kg equivalent) for 2025, up substantially from earlier estimates and prior years.