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Citrus growers urge Steenhuisen to tackle looming US tariff

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The CGA has urged Deputy Minister John Steenhuisen to help address looming US tariffs on South African citrus exports. Source: Agoa

Newly appointed Deputy Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition John Steenhuisen should use his experience in agricultural diplomacy to help protect South Africa's citrus exports from looming US tariffs, the Citrus Growers' Association (CGA) says.

The association said Steenhuisen's recent appointment to the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (dtic) presented an opportunity to support ongoing negotiations with the United States on a bilateral trade agreement that could reduce the impact of proposed tariffs on South African citrus exports.

South African citrus exports to the US, excluding oranges, were currently subject to a 10% tariff, CGA CEO Dr Boitshoko Ntshabele said in the association's latest newsletter. A proposed 12.5% tariff could replace the current measure when it expires later this month, further increasing costs for exporters.

As [previously reported by Freight News](#), the proposed tariff stems from a Section 301 investigation by the Office of the United States Trade Representative into global forced labour regulatory frameworks. While South Africa maintains it complies with international labour standards, the proposal could place the country in a higher tariff bracket because it does not have specific domestic import prohibitions on goods produced with forced labour. Oranges are exempt from the proposed tariff, but other citrus varieties, wine and table grapes remain exposed.

"The Department of Trade, Industry and Competition has been in negotiations with the US towards concluding a bilateral trade deal, which may ameliorate some of the tariff impacts felt by our growers. This is an opportunity that we believe the newly sworn-in deputy minister in that department, John Steenhuisen, can seize as part of his essential role at the dtic," Ntshabele said.

"Steenhuisen has achieved a number of agri-diplomatic successes, which gives him unique experience in addressing tariff and non-tariff barriers."

The industry was also monitoring ongoing UK-EU realignment talks, which could result in the UK adopting EU citrus phytosanitary requirements, increasing compliance costs for South African exporters, Ntshabele said.

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