

South Africa citrus sector faces critical market access challenges

By [Fred Meintjes](#) | 10 July 2026

CGA chief executive Boitshoko Ntshabele has called on South Africa's new ministerial appointments to act swiftly on trade negotiations



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A lot is currently on the table for the South African fresh fruit sector in terms of gaining, optimising and retaining markets.

That is the view of Dr Boitshoko Ntshabele, chief executive of the Citrus Growers' Association of South Africa (CGA).

“Our work is cut out for us, and we should all commit to boosting our exports to the benefit of South Africa,” he outlined.

Ntshabele welcomed the country’s new ministerial appointments in agriculture and trade and industries, and said that there are new opportunities which now must be seized upon.

While noting the appointment of new agricultural minister Willie Aucamp, and the move of previous agriculture minister John Steenhuisen to deputy minister of trade and industry, he pointed to the considerable challenges facing citrus sector.

“Just one example is that in the United Kingdom we are seeing that benefits that have accrued previously to citrus exports now being threatened by the ongoing EU/UK realignment talks,” Ntshabele continued.

“Since Brexit, the UK has had a different approach to South African citrus. Now, with the realignment, we will likely see the EU requirements becoming mandatory for our fruit shipped to the UK, with all related compliance costs kicking in.

“South Africa’s fruit industry remains a key contributor to foreign earnings as an export-driven industry,” he said. “This must be protected and grown.”

In line with the CGA’s Vision 260, the industry is on track to deliver more citrus to exports markets.



Summer Citrus from South Africa season begins in US

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“We also need to maintain traction in opening new markets,” Ntshabele continued.

“As previously reported, our BRICS counterpart, India, issued a World Trade Organization notification for the in-transit cold treatment protocol that we’ve been engaging in over the years. This is a sign of good progress.”

The industry is hoping that, upon the conclusion of the notice period in the coming month, this will be implemented immediately.

South Africa’s market access initiatives are, among other efforts, looking at the South-East Asian markets, and it is here that co-operation between the Department of Agriculture and the CGA can deliver meaningful results, he outlined.

Ntshabele also noted that South Africa’s citrus exports to the US still face a 10 per cent tariff.

This could potentially be replaced by a 12.5 per cent tariff, to be installed when the 10 per cent tariff expires later this month.

“The Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (DTIC) has been in negotiations with the US towards concluding a bilateral trade deal, which might reduce some of the tariff impacts felt by our growers,” he explained.

”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.

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

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