South Africa estimates citrus exports down 5 percent due to flood damage

After Initial assessments, the Citrus Growers' Association of Southern Africa (CGA) has reported that recent severe weather in the region will lead to at least a five-percent decrease in export estimates from flood-damaged areas, including Patensie (Eastern Cape) and Citrusdal and Boland (Western Cape).

"At this stage it is difficult to establish more precise figures on the impact of the flooding, as a limited number of growers have still not regained access to their orchards to assess the damage," said CGA CEO Boitshoko Ntshabele in a statement released by the organization.

The industry leader said these preliminary damage estimates will likely rise over time as the weather's delayed effects become evident.

The floods hit mandarins the worst

According to CGA reports, the mandarin crop has been the worst hit, as the rain concentrated over the country's main production regions, interrupting harvesting activities at a critical early stage of the season.

In general, orchards situated close to rivers bore the brunt of the weather front, while the majority of orchards received rainfall without damage and are able to supply high-quality fruit. Most affected farms are working hard to recover from flood-related delays, the organization explained, adding that despite revised export volumes, the integrity and reliability of supply to international markets remains intact.

"The timing of the rain was particularly challenging, as the citrus season was just beginning to gain momentum," Ntshabele added.

Even though the infrastructure in the Eastern and Western Capes was severely hit. the weather didn't disrupt the season's timing, which is, according to the CGA, two to three weeks ahead of schedule.

The South African ag industry calls for more aid

Following the South African government's immediate declaration of a national state of disaster, the CGA is joining fellow agricultural associations, including the South African Table Grape Industry (SATI), to request increased disaster relief and recovery support to producers and rural communities.

Some of the most severe impacts were felt in the Kouga Municipality in the Eastern Cape, where some citrus orchards were flooded to such an extent that topsoil was washed away, trees uprooted, and roads destroyed.

The extreme weather challenges come at an already difficult time for growers, who are facing rising input costs due to global disruptions resulting from the war in the Middle East.

"Expectations at the beginning of the year were for a strong season, but this has since turned out to be one requiring a high degree of adaptability from producers and exporters alike, but we are up for the challenge," said Ntshabele.

**All images courtesy of CGA.*

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