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South Africa kicks off summer citrus season in the US with new logistics routes

Industry body Summer Citrus from South Africa (SCSA) is kicking off its 2026 export season to the United States, with **first shipments scheduled to arrive this month**. The organization is reinforcing logistics to guarantee supply throughout the campaign.

SCSA reported that approximately 170 containers will arrive at the beginning of the season, primarily Easy Peelers and Navel oranges. **The MSC Carmen will be the first ship to reach the Port of Philadelphia carrying South African fruit**, followed by weekly arrivals and specialized conventional vessels.

New gateway into the South

Since October 2025, **Mediterranean Shipping Company (MSC) has been operating an exclusive service between South Africa and the United States**, including a seasonal stop in Philadelphia to supply the Northeastern market.

As a novelty for the 2026 season, MSC vessels will incorporate **weekly calls at Savannah, Georgia**, creating a new entry point for citrus destined for the Southern US market.

“The addition of Savannah expands our ability to service customers in the South and provides greater flexibility to our supply chain,” explained SCSA CEO, Suhanra Conradie.

The executive emphasized that maintaining reliable partnerships with shipping companies remains a priority to ensure a constant flow of fruit throughout the season.

Meanwhile, SCSA renewed its agreement with the shipping company Seatrade. Under this program, the first conventional vessel will arrive in Philadelphia shortly after the Fourth of July, helping to maintain supply continuity during the citrus season.

Lower citrus volume after a record campaign

Following the record season in 2025, **the association expects a decrease in export volumes in 2026, especially for Navel oranges**.

However, the organization said that it will continue to balance available supply with market demand, aiming to maintain a sustainable and stable program for producers, importers, and retailers.

Conradie emphasized that logistics planning begins several months before the start of the campaign, including negotiations with shipping companies and coordination with the various stakeholders in the commercial chain.

"By March, retailers are normally already prepared to discuss imported citrus programs. From that moment we build our shipment plan and align all logistics partners to guarantee consistent weekly shipments and arrivals throughout the season," she explained.

Quality and climate under monitoring

Fruit quality continues to be one of the keys of the program.

According to [SCSA](), **only premium quality citrus makes it to the US market**, ensuring a positive experience for consumers and strengthening confidence in the category.

Although some South African regions recorded heavy rainfall during May, the impact on Western Cape, the main production area supplying the North American market, has been manageable.

Although weather conditions caused minor delays in the logistics chain, the organization maintained its volume projections for the season and made limited adjustments to vessel itineraries to avoid shipment disruptions.

**All images are referential.*

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