

South Africa raises lemon export forecast to 49.4 million cartons

The Citrus Growers' Association of Southern Africa (CGA), following a meeting of its Lemon Variety Focus Group, has revised its export estimate for the 2026 lemon season upwards. After the initial projection of 45.8 million 15kg cartons, the projection has been revised recently to 49.4 million cartons, reflecting the dynamic and somewhat unpredictable nature of the current season.

The adjustment is largely attributed to favourable growing conditions across key producing regions. Although the season started later than usual, three significant cold fronts accelerated fruit colour development, contributing to improved readiness for export. Increased rainfall in many lemon-producing areas has resulted in a positive growth curve, supporting larger fruit sizes, ultimately resulting in higher carton volumes.

The CGA emphasised that strong coordination, effective communication, and logistical capacity across the value chain will assist in managing the increased volumes. These efforts aim to ensure a steady and stable supply of fruit to global markets, preventing under- and oversupply at any given time.

Packing activity remains concentrated in key regions, with Senwes, Patensie, and the Boland currently accounting for the bulk of volumes still to be harvested. Regions that have recorded the most significant upward revisions in their projections include Letsitele in Limpopo and the Sundays River Valley in the Eastern Cape.

Despite higher overall volumes, the updated forecast indicates a shift in the seasonal profile. The lemon season is expected to conclude more abruptly than usual, with a noticeable drop in volume around mid-July, rather than a gradual tapering.

The CGA has also confirmed that fruit quality for the season remains excellent, reinforcing South Africa's reputation as a reliable supplier of high-quality citrus to international markets.

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Publication date: Mon 22 Jun 2026

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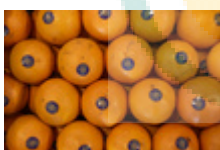
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