

South African fruit stranded as Middle East problems mount

By [Fred Meintjes](#) | 11 March 2026

South African fruit exporters are grappling with mounting losses as vessels carrying stonefruit and table grapes remain stranded in the Gulf



Image: Adobe Stock

South African exporters sending fruit to the Middle East have said that a large number of containers are still on vessels in the Gulf, after they could not be discharged at regional ports.

The hardest hit are stonefruit and table grape exporters, and it is reported that 176 containers of stonefruit are affected.

The fruit will now have to be moved to Indian ports and from there transshipped to other ports in the Middle East.

It is not certain how many containers of table grapes are involved.

"This remains a developing situation," said a spokesperson from table grape industry body Sati.

"The table grape sector will be impacted by ongoing events in the Middle East, much like other commodities and industries.

"Shipping lines are diverting to alternative ports," the spokesperson continued. "In the short-term, consequences may include over or under supply of markets and price pressure.

"There will be cost implications - additional surcharges by shipping lines and likely loss of income from shipments that are unable to reach the intended markets."



**Middle East
conflict threatens
South African fruit
exports**

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For table grapes, Sati noted that the impact may be less severe than commodities that rely more heavily on markets in the Middle East, because only 4 per cent of national table grape volumes shipped in 2024/25 season were exported to the region.

"However, the auxiliary impacts, such as congestion in the global supply chain, are expected to have significant ripple effects," the industry body said.

"Pressure caused by additional shipping surcharges and potential loss of income comes during an extremely difficult season, where table grape producers have been exposed to numerous aspects causing pressure in the value chain."

For stonefruit from South Africa, the war in the Middle East comes at a particularly bad time.

"Growers and exporters have already suffered greatly from disruptions and delays in the Port of Cape Town which delayed their volumes to traditional markets in the UK and Europe," the spokesperson added. "We can hardly afford losses in the Middle East."

It is not clear how early exports of apples, pears and lemons to the Middle East are affected.

Sources have said it is not possible to book shipping space to the Middle East and supply is expected to be affected for some time.