South Africa becomes largest citrus exporter with 2.9 million tons in 2025

South Africa was the world's largest citrus exporter by volume in 2025, supplying marginally more fruit to international markets than Spain in the past season. South Africa exported 2.9 million tons of citrus last year. This development, clear from the recently finalised 2025 statistics, highlights South Africa's citrus production and export growth in recent years.

These figures should also be seen alongside recent seasons of tighter export availability from Spain, as producers there have navigated increasingly complex climatic and production conditions. These shifts underline how finely balanced global citrus supply has become, rather than signalling any structural change in Europe's importance to the category. Northern Hemisphere supply is expected to return to higher volumes when seasonal weather conditions are more conducive to fruit production.

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The 2025 statistics relate specifically to exports. South Africa is not the world's largest citrus producer, with significant volumes of citrus produced in countries such as China, Brazil, and Spain - largely serving their domestic markets. South Africa's position reflects its export-oriented model, its strong compliance with international plant health and sustainability standards, its high fruit quality, and long-standing integration into global supply chains.

South Africa and Spain play highly complementary roles in the citrus value chain. Spain anchors supply during the Northern Hemisphere season, while South Africa provides continuity during the Northern Hemisphere summer months. This seasonal coordination ensures that Northern Hemisphere consumers have consistent access to world-class citrus throughout the year, supporting category stability, shelf presence, and long-term consumption.

"Volume is just one single measure with which to assess an industry. South African growers continue to face challenges. Currently, the impact of the situation in the Middle East on fuel costs and shipping routes is a concern, which is placing significant pressure on grower margins. Growers also face unpredictable prices and market dynamics, rising input costs, as well as market access issues such as high tariffs and unscientific plant health measures," explained Dr Boitshoko Ntshabele, CEO of the CGA.

South Africa's citrus performance has been driven by sustained investment in orchards and production techniques. However, the citrus production growth underscores the need for more decisive government action on market access, to ensure that increasing volumes can reach existing markets such as the EU, the United States, India, and China profitably, efficiently, and at lower cost. The CGA's Vision 260 reflects the industry's focus on long-term grower sustainability and unlocking the potential to export 260 million cartons by 2032.

"The citrus industry in South Africa supports at least 140 000 jobs on farm and packhouse level alone. It forms the heart of many rural economies throughout the country - from Letsitele in Limpopo to Addo in the Eastern Cape to Citrusdal in the Western Cape," said Dr Ntshabele.

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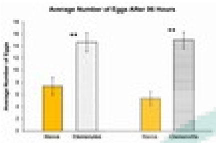

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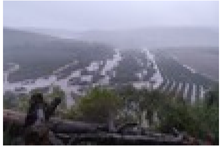

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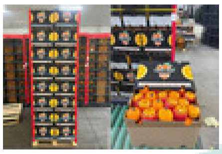

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