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South Africa was world's largest citrus exporter in 2025, CGA says

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Industry organisation the Citrus Growers' Association of Southern Africa (CGA) says South Africa exported 2.9-million tonnes of citrus in 2025, making it the world's largest citrus exporter by volume ahead of Spain.

The country is continuing to strengthen its position in global export markets through sustained production growth and an investment in orchards.

The 2025 statistics relate specifically to exports, given that South Africa is not the world's largest citrus producer, as significant volumes of citrus are 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.

The CGA adds that these figures should also be viewed alongside recent seasons of tighter export availability from Spain, as producers there have navigated increasingly complex climatic and production conditions.

South Africa and Spain play highly complementary roles in the citrus value chain as Spain anchors supply during the northern hemisphere season, while South Africa provides continuity during the northern hemisphere summer months.

Therefore, 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.

Further, these shifts underline how finely balanced global citrus supply has become, rather than signalling any structural change in Europe's importance to the category. The CGA also notes that northern hemisphere supply is expected to return to higher volumes when seasonal weather conditions are more conducive to fruit production.

CGA CEO Dr **Boitshoko Ntshabele** notes that 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 US, 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.

"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 price and market dynamics, rising input costs, as well as market access issues such as high tariffs and unscientific plant health measures," Ntshabele explains.

"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," Ntshabele concludes.

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