

Western Cape citrus sector gains expanded access to Chinese market

Western Cape Minister of Agriculture, Economic Development and Tourism, Dr Ivan Meyer, has welcomed the supplementary citrus phytosanitary agreement between South Africa and China, formalised on 10 April 2026, saying it will ease export requirements and strengthen market access for Western Cape citrus producers.

"This agreement is a significant breakthrough for economic growth and job creation in the Western Cape. By removing trade barriers and expanding access to the Chinese market, we are creating new opportunities across the agricultural value chain, from farm workers to exporters, while strengthening the competitiveness of our citrus industry," said Minister Meyer.

The Minister said expanded access to China comes at a time when the agricultural sector continues to face global uncertainty.



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"Growing our export markets is essential to sustaining jobs and unlocking further economic growth. The opening of the Chinese market for increased citrus exports reduces volatility and helps cushion our producers and the workers they employ against disruptions caused by geopolitical tensions in traditional markets," he said.

Approximately 20 per cent of South Africa's citrus production is located in the Western Cape, and the agreement is expected to support export growth as compliance requirements become more efficient.

According to Meyer, the Western Cape Government is supporting producers through participation in trade shows and export exhibitions in China, facilitating business-to-business engagements with international buyers, providing extension and advisory services to assist with export compliance, and collaborating with industry stakeholders to strengthen competitiveness.

"Our focus is on ensuring that producers are well-positioned to expand exports, grow their businesses, and in turn sustain and create more jobs in rural communities," said the Minister.

Meyer added that China offers long-term potential for the citrus sector due to its population of approximately 1.4 billion people, continued economic growth, and demand for imported fruit. He also pointed to South Africa's counter-seasonal supply advantage, which allows citrus exporters to supply the market when Northern Hemisphere production is low.

"This counter-seasonal advantage not only boosts export potential but also supports stable production cycles that are critical for job retention in the sector," he said.

While acknowledging ongoing port and logistics challenges, Meyer said the provincial government would continue working with stakeholders to improve export efficiency.

"Efficient logistics are essential to a thriving export sector, which in turn underpins economic growth and job creation. We will continue working with partners to unlock these gains," he said.

"Diversifying export markets is key to growing the Western Cape economy and creating sustainable jobs. This agreement demonstrates how strategic international partnerships can deliver inclusive growth and real benefits for our farmers and rural communities."

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Publication date: Thu 21 May 2026

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