Moneyweb

Economy

Agoa exit puts SA citrus and US supply-chain jobs at risk

With Washington set to remove SA from Agoa in 2027, citrus growers say tariff-exposed exports threaten orchards and jobs in the Western and Northern Cape.



Ray Mahlaka · 3 Nov 2026, 04:03

CROOKES R20.00
09/11/2026, 17:06

KAL GROUP R44.50 -0.43%
09/11/2026, 17:00

PSG FIN R30.71 0.89%
09/11/2026, 17:06

RCL R7.33 0.41%
09/11/2026, 17:00



The citrus industry responded swiftly to SA's planned exclusion from Agoa by the US, describing it as a 'serious blow'. Image: Supplied

An industry that has enjoyed duty-free export access to the US since 2000 has responded to the US's decision to remove South Africa from this trade privilege by warning of potential domestic job losses.

SA's citrus industry is one of many that stand to lose the most after the US confirmed late on Monday that it plans to remove the country from inclusion in the African Growth and Opportunity Act (Agoa).

Read: South Africa, Rwanda lose access to Agoa

Over the past 25 years, the citrus industry, along with the vehicle, jewellery, ferroalloys, nuts, beverages and spirits industries, has enjoyed tariff-free access to the US under Agoa.

The US, under Agoa, has in turn enjoyed exports of products including pork and poultry to SA.

US consumers 'will lose too'

The citrus industry responded swiftly to SA's planned exclusion from Agoa by the US, describing it as a "serious blow".

> It says the blow will be felt on both sides.

"This will be a loss not just for us, but the US consumer will lose too," says Dr Boitshoko Ntshabele, CEO of the Citrus Growers' Association of Southern Africa (CGA).

"Citrus trade between SA and the US has always been mutually beneficial. Our citrus is complementary to their production. Our fruit helps keep American consumers in the citrus category during the US off-season.

"Seasonal fresh produce does not threaten US jobs. It helps keep America healthy, and also helps contain food inflation."

Industry impact

According to the CGA, Agoa was particularly significant for growers in the Western and Northern Cape, where communities depend on the preferential trade between the US and SA.

> "A citrus grower cannot simply divert [their] crop to another market – markets have different phytosanitary requirements and consumer tastes," says CGA chair Gerrit van der Merwe in a statement.

“Entire orchards have been planted specifically for the US market. Our exclusion from Agoa will

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