

Monday 25th July 2016, 15:07 London

South African citrus volumes drop further

Country's citrus crop forecast decreases substantially as Valencia harvest starts

The South African citrus export crop has dropped even further than initial estimates predicted, as growers start their Valencia crop.

The country's initial crop forecast already pegged volumes at 10m cartons down on last year's total.

South Africa's citrus growers' association (CGA) now says its Valencia advisory group has forecast a further drop of nearly 5m cartons, representing a reduction of nearly 13 per cent compared with last year when 118.4m cartons were exported.

Valencias form the biggest part of the South African citrus category and the country normally exports around 50m cartons. With grapefruit already significantly down on last year, navels dropping below last year's level, marginal increases in soft citrus, but lemons dropping below pre-season forecasts, growers had hoped that the Valencia crop – although down on last year because of the drought – will still come through for them.

"As growers start to harvest their Valencias it has been apparent that the fruit is just not there," says the CGA. "Despite an excellent packout, the crop load is small. Most ascribe this to fruit drop due to the heat and dry conditions over the last summer."

CGA says that, as a result, the Valencia Focus Group has dropped its predicted volumes by 4.8m cartons. The Soft Citrus Focus Group and the Navel Focus Group have made slight upward changes to their predictions. "It's a strange season indeed," commented the CGA.

Last year South Africa exported 52.7m cartons of Valencias and the latest prediction puts the crop around 11m cartons lower than last year. This is a drop of around 21 per cent compared with last year.

The result of this is that exporters who are already struggling to secure volumes in order to service their customers, will have further problems.

Growers, on the other hand, will be in the pound seats with demand exceeding supply and therefore a further escalation in prices.

EUROFRUIT

