South African lemon exports fall short of expectations

South Africa's final packed for export volume of lemons has fallen short of forecasts, due in part to smaller-sized fruit than expected in a key growing region.

In a newsletter, Citrus Growers Association (CGA) of Southern Africa CEO Justin Chadwick said a year-on-year increase had been anticipated due to new lemon orchards coming into production.

The Lemon Focus Group had settled on an estimate of 16.1 million 15-kilogram-equivalent cartons.

"This proved ambitious as the final packed for export volume equalled 2015's record [of] 15 million cartons," Chadwick said.

"The Sundays River region (responsible for almost 2/3rds of southern African lemons) packed far less than estimate – mostly due to smaller sized fruit.

"The Senwes region (Groblersdal and Marble Hall) made a good recovery after a weather related poor crop in 2015 and packed above estimate."

In terms of markets, the Middle East continued to dominate lemon exports, increasing from 6.1 million cartons last year to 6.4 million. Exports to Europe increased from 2.3 million cartons to 3.4 million, while U.K.-bound shipments grew from 900,000 to 1.3 million.

North America and Africa remained static, receiving 500,000 and 100,000 respectively.

"The biggest losers were Russia (down from 1.9 m in 2015 to 0.9 million cartons) and South East Asia (down from 2.5 m cartons in 2015 to 2 million cartons in 2016)," he said.

While lemon exports did not increase over last year, estimates for easy peelers packed for export are estimated to have **exceeded 2015 levels** by more than 10%.

Last week Chadwick said excellent market conditions and good quality helped boost exports of the satsumas, clementines and mandarins.

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