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Drop in fruit exports to Russia

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Freshly harvested South African oranges.

South African fruit exports to Russia decreased by 2% last season - and with only 20% of the crop harvested to date, it is too early to tell if there will be an improvement this season (May to September).

“Russia, one of South Africa’s biggest markets, has in the past imported 12% of the fruit produced by South Africa,” said CEO of the Citrus Growers’ Association of Southern Africa (CGA), Justin Chadwick. “We saw this number decrease to 10% last year on the back of stricter import regulations and a slump in the Russian economy.”

A new Russian regulation demanding more product information on the labels has posed significant challenges because of the difficulty in getting the information required on each carton of fruit, according to Chadwick. As a result, fewer exports have made it through.

Russia remains a strong fruit export market for South Africa but Chadwick said that it was too early in the South African 2016 harvest season to tell if the export slump would turn around.

The fruit export basket to Russia includes citrus - oranges, grapefruit, lemons and mandarins - as well as table grapes, pears, apples and plums. The country also

imports exotic fruits such as mangoes and avocados from South Africa.

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