

IMPORTS AND EXPORTS

Drought expected to hit citrus exports

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CEO of the Citrus Growers' Association, Justin Chadwick.

South Africa's drought is expected to hit the citrus industry this year, reducing the citrus harvest and resulting in smaller-sized oranges that will be harder to sell to the country's main export markets, according to the Citrus Growers' Association (CGA).

"The big concern now is we have small amounts of small fruit and a lot of markets don't like small fruit. They like big fruit," Justin Chadwick, chief executive officer of the CGA was quoted by Bloomberg news agency as saying. Subsequently, Chadwick anticipates a reduction in export volumes.

One ray of hope however has been the rainfall in the the Eastern Cape province, the country's biggest producer of lemons, accounting for 50% of total output. Chadwick said that the region had had good rains toward the end of last year, filling dams sufficiently for irrigation farming. As a result, fruit coming from that area has helped supplement other regions that were harder hit.

Chadwick could not say by how much the export volumes would be reduced this season. South Africa exported 1.77 million metric tons of citrus fruit last year.

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