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Fruit industry spells out rail strategy

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The development of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in the agro-processing sector could help kick-start the transport of citrus exports by rail, according to Justin Chadwick, CEO of the Citrus Growers' Association of Southern Africa (CGA).

“Fruit South Africa is developing a rail strategy for the fruit sector and this focuses on specific areas where infrastructure is required to consolidate fruit for onward transport to ports for export,” said Chadwick.

A number of SEZs focusing on specific sectors had been earmarked across the country, he added. “Some of these are focused directly on the agriculture sector’s agro-processing, distribution and logistics services - specifically in Limpopo, at Musina and in Mpumalanga at Nkomazi.”

Chadwick explained that while citrus on its own was not a strong enough standalone commodity for investment in rail infrastructure, if SEZs were developed for multi-purpose use they could attract investment in the transport of citrus via rail.

“Most of the major export commodity groups are in a state of decline but the fruit export sector is in a state of growth,” said Chadwick. “Transnet has realised the oversight and is presently gearing for major investment in the fruit sector across the rail and port services divisions.”

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