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Grapefruit exporters to feel the pinch of projected slump

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Star Ruby grapefruit is one of the varieties exported out of South Africa.

Grapefruit exports are projected to slump even further this season due to abnormal weather conditions.

The Grapefruit Focus Group (GFG) – established by the Citrus Growers' Association of Southern Africa's (CGA's) – has further adjusted its projection of grapefruit export volumes, decreasing it from the initial prediction of 12.4 million cartons of grapefruit to a total of 12.1 million cartons. This is a further 2.5% decrease.

However, CEO of the CGA, Justin Chadwick, told FTW Online that he was hopeful that the situation would improve.

“This will not be the final word on the export numbers as grapefruit is still currently being exported, so the end result could be different at the close of the season,” he said.

According to him, citrus growers and exporters are blaming the abnormal grapefruit season on unusual weather conditions.

“A hot and dry summer was an early indication of a low volume crop of smaller fruit. Late rains in March then resulted in increased sizing, catching most of the trade by

surprise,” said Chadwick.

“Importers who had been cautioned about small size fruit suddenly found themselves short of smaller fruit. Winter also arrived late in the grapefruit growing regions, delaying the colour development of the fruit.”

Chadwick explained that because grapefruit growers are very aware of the importance of only supplying what the market requires, packing of the fruit was delayed until the colour was right.

“This resulted in a low volume of early fruit, and more of a peak as the colour developed,” he said.

Of the predicted 12.1 million cartons, 6.5 million have been shipped so far.

The GFG has also warned about the possibility of an abnormally early finish to the season – which normally concludes in September – and has suggested that packers and importers manage their stocks carefully so as not to run short later in the season.

Last year’s grapefruit season saw a total of 16.1 million cartons exported out of SA – the majority of which was imported by Russia.



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