

Citrus growers wave goodbye to 2018

The South African citrus industry set another record as it exceeds all seasonal expectations

The 2018 South African citrus export season is all but over and has ended in record volumes which are even higher than previously predicted.

Now all that remains for exporters is the arduous task of collecting outstanding money before they break for a well-earned Christmas holiday by mid-December.

The latest crop figure published by the South African Citrus Growers' Association is 135.7m cartons, up from the early estimate of 131.7m cartons and some 14m cartons higher than last year's export figure.

"The season is now over and this is our final figures for 2018," declared the CGA. It was undoubtedly another momentous record breaking season for South African citrus growers, with the export volume growing by some 26m cartons since 2016.

The industry is now well on track to reach 161m cartons by 2025, which will mean a further increase in export volumes of 19 per cent over the next seven years.

Grapefruit had an excellent year – at 18.7m cartons, exceeding the forecast by around 2m cartons, and 3m cartons more than 2017.

The forecast for 2025 shows that grapefruit will be at 15m cartons, fewer than this season.

Soft citrus came in at 16.1m cartons compared with last year's 13m cartons. Soft citrus is expected to increase to around 23m cartons by 2025.

Lemons will end at 19.8m cartons compared with 18.8m cartons shipped last year – and by 2025 there will be a huge increase to 30m cartons, which is a 51 per cent increase.

Valencias were more or less on the same level as last year and at 54m cartons remains the biggest South African citrus category. By 2025 Valencias will rise to 60m cartons.

Navels showed a healthy recovery of around 5m cartons after a difficult 2017 season – and the category is expected to reach 41m cartons by 2025, an increase of about 60 per cent over the next seven years.

