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Southern African citrus exports on an upward trajectory

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Southern African citrus exporters are upbeat about growth for the 2018 season with the Citrus Marketing Forum of Southern Africa predicting a 7.1% uptick in volumes, translating into 131.7 million 15 kilogram cartons.

This as the regions accounting for the largest volumes of citrus in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Swaziland recorded significant growth due to good growing conditions and recovery from drought.

Citrus Growers' Association (CGA) CEO Justin Chadwick said that in general most varieties of citrus exports exhibited good internal quality, normal sizing and good external appearance due to warm and dry climatic conditions over the summer months.

Grapefruit exports are expected to grow 8% this year while there's little change expected in Valencia exports.

After a "disastrous" 2017, navels are expected to increase by a whopping 21.2%.

"It is expected that future growth in this commodity will come from late maturing varieties with early maturing orchards being taken out," said Chadwick.

Lemons are looking at 8% growth although sizing is expected to be slightly smaller.

Overall growth of 10% is estimated for soft citrus, driven by late mandarin types which increased by 19%, while satsumas, clementines and novas showed modest gains.