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Positive outlook for SA citrus

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The South African citrus industry is expecting continued growth in 2020, particularly in the export of soft citrus, lime and lemons, according to a report released by the US Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service last week.

The 27-page report stated that the increase in exports of soft citrus, lime and lemons was mainly due to a greater yield, attractive investment returns, and new plantings, with exports expected to rise by 8% in 2020.

"The export of lemons and limes is forecast to increase by 8 per cent to 370 000 metric tons in the 2019/20 marketing year, from 343 000 metric tons in the 2018/19 marketing year, based on the increase in production and growth in demand from the Middle East and Asian markets," the USDA said.

Despite an increase in demand for citrus from the sub-continent, the European Union still accounts for the largest share of citrus imports from South Africa, with the Netherlands importing 44 712 metric tons of lemons and limes in 2019.

Meanwhile, oranges kept their spot as the country's most sought after citrus type, accounting for 53 per cent of total citrus produced.

Limpopo made up the bulk of citrus production in the country at 43 per cent, followed by the Eastern Cape and Western Cape who are trailing behind at 26% and 18%, respectively. – Bjorn Vorster