

Bittersweet taste to lemon exports

22 Nov 2021



July's anarchy, which saw the destruction of supply chain assets across eThekweni and brought private sector freight interests to their knees, combined with nagging port delays and spiralling expenses, have knocked South African exporters hard.

In his most recently weekly roundup, Justin Chadwick, CEO of the Citrus Growers' Association, said: "This has been a very tough lemon season given the range of logistics and market challenges growers and exporters have had to face.

"While export volumes are up, this does not necessarily translate into better returns back to farms as the costs have increased significantly, the exchange rate moved against exporters, and lemon prices are well below 2020 values."

Focusing on exports, Chadwick said that outgoing fruit numbered 31 million cartons in 2021, "finishing 3% up on the March 2021 estimate of 30.2 million cartons".

Sundays River did 13.5m, making it the biggest exporting region, although it came in 3% below its initial estimate.

The Patensie, Boland and Senwes (central west region) regions did particularly well, with above-estimate figures of 21%, 19% and 8%, exporting 1.8 million, 2.6m, and 3.8m cartons respectively.

Chadwick explained: “This growth can be attributed to recent planting now coming into production.”

It should be kept in mind that Patensie had to deal with very dry conditions for the relevant production cycle.

“Hoedspruit (2.3m cartons) was 6% less than the estimate,” he added.

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