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SA ports in control of citrus industry's export goals

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Port performance will play an overarching role in the citrus industry's ability to meet its export targets.

That's according to the Citrus Growers' Association, which has revealed that overall the 2021 citrus export prediction for southern Africa is now 155 million cartons, or 5% off the original estimate.

"The big variable in play now is the port's ability to ship the remaining 53 million cartons. The impact of the cyberattack, coming close on the heels of the insurrection, means that South African ports are all heavily congested.

While the port role-players are working feverishly at dealing with the backlog, clearing containers inbound and outbound, clearing cold stores of accumulated fruit, and servicing all the fruit arriving in port, growers have been advised to ensure that their fruit can be handled before trucking it to the port" says CGA CEO Justin Chadwick.

Based on figures prepared by Portia Magwaza, the organisation's research economist, with South Africa having reached the two-thirds mark in terms of citrus packed and passed for export, early estimates are not far off the mark.

Grapefruit is 94% complete, with just 1 million cartons of the 17.2 million predicted (15Kg) to pack. If this prediction is realised it will be just 5.5% below the 18 million estimate.

Lemons are at exactly the same point - 94% packed and passed for export - with 1.5 million 15Kg cartons still to pack to get to the latest prediction of 27 million cartons. This prediction is 3.2 million less than the original estimate – a drop of 10%.

Navels have packed and passed for export 22 million cartons – with 4.3 million still to pack to get to the predicted 25.3 million (87% packed). If realised, the prediction will be just 4% off the original estimate.

There are still 9 million cartons of soft citrus to pack in order to get to the predicted 30.1 million cartons – i.e. 70% packed and passed. The prediction is still tracking the original estimate (only 100 000 cartons off the original 30.2 million estimate). The big numbers to come are in Valencia oranges – with just 30% of the predicted 55.4 million cartons already packed. The prediction is now 2.6 million cartons (5.4%) off the original 58 million carton estimate.

CGA and Transnet are holding regular meetings with all role-players in a bid to keep all informed, and to reduce pressure on an already pressurised port system.

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