

Ukraine war squeezes SA's citrus exports to Russia



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The war in Ukraine has stifled South Africa's citrus exports to Russia and driven input costs higher, further squeezing fruit producers already suffering from spiralling shipping costs, an industry body said.



Source: Hans via [Pixabay](#)

The war, which started on 24 February, blocked South Africa's citrus shipments to Russia in the immediate aftermath, Citrus Growers Association of Southern Africa (CGA) chief executive Justin Chadwick told Reuters.

Although shipments to Russia have since resumed, exports have slumped as producers concerned about payments and shipping delays explore other markets.

"Since then, the United Kingdom's share of soft citrus has increased from 24% to 61%, at the expense of Russia decreasing from 32% to 5%," Chadwick said.

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The Middle East and South East Asia were also taking up more of South Africa's mandarins and grapefruit, respectively.



SA citrus industry to mitigate impact of Russia-Ukraine war on supply

South Africa's total citrus exports to Russia has fallen by nearly 70% on a year-to-date basis compared with the same period last year, according to CGA data.

South Africa shipped 11.2 million 15 kg cartons of citrus fruit last year to Russia, its fifth biggest export market, according to the industry group.

But the biggest impact of the war has been the surge in oil and gas prices, Chadwick said. "The war has also resulted in a major hike in fertiliser, fuel and agrochemical prices, which will continue to place strain on Southern African citrus growers and farmers across the world."

The war has also hit shipping, Chadwick said, with major European ports used by South African fruit exporters being heavily congested as all Russia-bound containers are scanned, extending transit times to 90 days from the usual 24 days.

Before the war, the industry was already grappling with sky-rocketing shipping costs, which jumped by about 150% over the past year, according to Chadwick.

"At these levels, it now costs between 2 and 2.5 times as much to ship the fruit as it does to produce it over the course of an entire year," he said.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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