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New era begins for lemon and pear exports to China

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South Africa has ramped up its export of lemons to China through the Port of Durban as massive growth in local production of the citrus fruit is forecast over the next few years.

Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Thoko Didiza, is expected to visit Durban port on Thursday when a consignment of about 100 000 lemons, packed under a new protocol and destined for China, will be loaded for export.

The improved market access for South African lemons to China, transported under ideal temperature conditions, was achieved through a revised protocol that was signed in September 2021.

“The signing of the protocol came at an opportune time for South African farmers as local lemon production is expected to grow by 175 000 metric tons by 2024,” the Department of Agriculture Land Reform and Rural Development said in a statement.

Didiza will see off the shipment.

South Africa also signed a protocol with China on the export of pears in December last year.

“This protocol is expected to raise the current 22% of pears the country is exporting to the Far East,” the department said.

This comes after President Cyril Ramaphosa announced during his State of the Nation Address last week that the agricultural sector had significant potential for job creation in crops such as citrus, table and dried grapes, subtropical fruit, avocados, berries and nuts.

“Master plans in the sugar and poultry industries are contributing significantly to increased investment, improved production and transformation.

“Some of the country’s mature industries also have a lot to offer in revamping the industrial and manufacturing potential of our country,” Ramaphosa said.

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