

IMPORTS AND EXPORTS

Logistics remain the main concern for Limpopo citrus producers

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Source: Food for Mzansi

Logistics remain a concern for fruit farmers from the north-eastern region of South Africa, the Citrus Growers Association (CGA) has found following a fact-finding mission to Limpopo Province.

Despite its relative proximity to the Port of Maputo and the N4 corridor serving that port, exporters from the areas of Letsitele, Hoedspruit, and Burgersfort/Ohrigstad prefer to ship through the Port of Durban, CGA chief executive Justin Chadwick has said.

“Logistics continue to weigh on growers’ minds, especially from these regions, which are in some cases, 1 000 kilometres from the Durban port.”

Although Maputo is an option for diverting volume away from Durban and its sporadic congestion problems, growers will still send the bulk of the outbound product to this port, Chadwick added.

It is not certain whether the often-extended waiting time at the Lebombo-Ressano Garcia border crossing into Mozambique has anything to do with this long-standing

travel time impediment (*).

Nevertheless, the propensity of Limpopo's growers to prefer Durban over Maputo required deft planning, Chadwick said.

"All in the supply chain will need to plan carefully, and be linked into information on road conditions and port operations in order to adopt and adapt to circumstances as they arise."

Chadwick lauded the resilience and resourcefulness of growers from the region's areas, especially as they managed to keep harvests on track despite challenging weather conditions.

"Letsitele and Limpopo River regions did not get one millimetre of rain in February; Ohrigstad and Hoedspruit didn't do much better. Fortunately, most growers still have good water resources from excellent December and January rains.

"There were also localised incidences of hail in Burgersfort/Ohrigstad and also in Limpopo River – the first time in over 20 years for this region."

Thankfully, the crop managed to benefit from a good balance of rain and heat, securing exports for 2022. However, exporters would do well to bear in mind the consequences of huge increases in freight rates, input costs, energy and labour, Chadwick cautioned.

"In 2021 it would have been better for some fruit to have been left at home as returns did not cover cost.

"Growers must do their sums in 2022 to ensure that export cartons are, in fact, profitable."

* Read this for context: <https://tinyurl.com/y8zeta3n>).

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