

South Africa citrus volume up from 2022

The latest estimate for the volume of the 2023 South Africa citrus crop is 165.6 million cartons, which is 800,000 more than last year.



The fruit marketing and sales company, [Vanguard International Group](#), Issaquah, WA, on May 31 shared the latest citrus estimate update from South Africa.

This report notes that two particularly interesting commodities have emerged in the industry.

Lemons have witnessed a significant surge in plantings over the past few years. Currently, there are approximately 20,000 acres of lemon trees in South Africa that are less than six years old, with approximately 4,300 acres of that falling into the category of being no more than four years old.

Also coming on in South Africa, are Mandarins, with more than 33,000 acres of Mandarin orchards that are no more than six years old. Of these, about 18,000 acres are four years or younger.

Overall in South Africa this season, all indications point to slightly larger fruit size for citrus. This is promising as the overall volume will not be negatively affected. Lemon packing began in late January, and over 9 million cartons have already left South African shores since then. The Eastern Cape is packing large lemon volumes and supply is good. As of the first week of May, grapefruit packing was 30% complete with 3.7 million cartons packed. The peak sizes for grapefruits range from 40 to 45 and 50. The packing process for Navels was initially slowed by higher-than-normal rains in Limpopo and Mpumalanga packing. Nevertheless, volume was to pick up quickly going into mid-May, with fruit sizing slightly larger compared to the 2022 crop.

The first Turkey Valencias were to start in the last days of May, with the bulk volume becoming available from week 24 – June 11-17 - onwards. ("Turkey Valencia" is a type of Valencia that originated in Turkey, but its production is not limited there today.) Valencia size is expected to be ideal for markets seeking larger fruit; however, this may create a shortage for markets in areas such as Bangladesh, Malaysia, and Singapore. As for Midnights, the earliest start is projected for the last week of June, with bulk volumes anticipated in mid-July.

From a marketing perspective, the prevalent issues of inflation and the rising cost of living are particularly impacting European demand, which in turn affects the buying power of consumers.

On the logistics front, there are concerns regarding exports to the EU during the peak of the orange season due to the new cold treatment regulations. These shifts will put immense strain on all aspects of the logistical infrastructure. Cold storage space will be in high demand, and the electricity situation in South Africa will make meeting these demands extremely challenging.

Over the next five years, expectations in South Africa are for significant growth in soft citrus and lemon production. Valencia oranges are expected to continue with normal growth, but there is an anticipated decline in grapefruit and more traditional Navel oranges.

Vanguard

Founded in 1991, Vanguard International has been marketing and selling fresh fruits and vegetables in Asia and the Middle East for over 25 years, operating offices internationally in Chile, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Peru, Spain, Taiwan, South Africa, and the United States.

