

South African citrus exports lag behind forecasts

By [Fred Meintjes](#) | 23 November 2023

The final export figures for the South African citrus campaign are below the expected growth curve based on plantings, but mandarin exports have taken off

South Africa's final export figures for 2023 put the industry behind its projection to reach 260m cartons within ten years. The Citrus Growers' Association (CGA) said the final figure for 2023 was substantially below the anticipated growth curve based on plantings.

"This season southern African citrus growers packed 165.1m (15kg) cartons for delivery to global markets," the CGA revealed. "While this is an increase of approximately 800,000 cartons from the packed figures of last year, it is still 500,000 cartons lower than the forecast at the start of the season. It is, more importantly, substantially below the anticipated growth curve based on plantings that could see the industry potentially hitting 200m cartons in the next four years, and possibly 260m cartons by 2032."

"This highlights that growers continue to face a number of challenges when it comes to getting their fruit to key markets," the association added.

Mandarins appeared to be the star of the show. The CGA said exports continue to increase substantially, increasing by 6.1m cartons, with 37.9m cartons packed.

The figure is 3.8m more than the pre-season forecast and is the result of sharp increases in planting of mandarins in recent years.

The CGA said the growth in mandarin exports was largely due to increased orchard plantings as well as strong demand in the EU and UK.

Grapefruit ended the season 1.9m cartons down compared with 2022. "It is, nonetheless, 400,000 cartons more than estimated at the beginning of the season," the CGA said. "The 2023 total, 14.8m, is considerably less than the 20.3m packed two years ago in 2021, continuing the downward trajectory."

Lemons showed an increase of 900,000 more cartons, bringing the total to 35.6m. "However, this was 1.3m cartons less than the pre-season estimate," the CGA stated.

EUROFRUIT has recorded a decrease overall. This year, 24.7m cartons of Navels were packed, 3.1m less than last year, and slightly below the estimate. Valencias also recorded a decrease of 1.7m cartons, with a total of 52.1m cartons packed. This total is 2.4m less than the original forecast.

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