



2023 final Southern African citrus export figures:

Lower than predicted growth as a result of ongoing challenges facing growers

In the 2023 export season Southern African citrus growers packed 165.1 million (15kg) cartons for delivery to global markets. While this is an increase of approximately 800 000 from the packed figures of last year, it is still 500,000 cartons lower than the forecast at the start of the season and more importantly, substantially below the anticipated growth curve based on plantings that can see the industry potentially hitting 200 million cartons in the next 4 years, and possibly 260 million cartons by 2032. This highlights that growers continued to face a number of challenges when it comes to getting their fruit to key markets.

When it comes to each cultivar:

- This year 1.9 million less cartons of Grapefruit were packed for export than in 2022. It is nonetheless 400,000 more than estimated at the beginning of the season. The 2023 total, 14.8 million, is considerably less than the 20.3 million packed two years ago in 2021, continuing the downward trajectory.
- Mandarin exports continue to increase substantially. This past season 37.9 million cartons were packed, an increase of 6.1 million year-on-year and 3.8 million more than estimated at the start of the season. This growth is largely due to increased orchard plantings as well as strong demand in the European Union (EU) and the United Kingdom.
- Lemons also showed an increase. 900,000 more cartons were packed this past season, bringing the total to 35.6 million. However, this was 1.3 million cartons less than the pre-season estimate.
- Oranges have shown a decrease overall. This year 24.7 million cartons of Navels were packed, 3.1 million less than last year, and slightly below the estimate. Valencias also recorded a decrease - 1.7 million cartons less, with a total of 52.1 million cartons packed. This total is 2.4 million less than the original estimation.

Following an extremely challenging two years, where only one in five growers made a profit, this year's better market prices and reduced shipping costs offered a measure of relief to many growers.

However, they continued to face a number of challenges which negatively impacted the amount of citrus they could export and their profits. These included sustained high levels of load shedding, which impacted their ability to irrigate, fertilize, pack and cool citrus, the latter being an essential phytosanitary requirement for many export varieties.

The general surge in farming input costs continued during the 2023 season and placed pressure on growers. Devastating floods in the Western Cape in June also impacted farms in that province. The flood caused damage of at least R500 million to citrus farms in the Citrusdal valley.

For more information:

Citrus Growers' Association of Southern Africa

PO Box 461, Hillcrest

3650, KZN, South Africa

Tel: (031) 765 2514

Fax: (031) 765 8029

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