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Ukraine war doesn't hold back SA citrus shipped to Russia

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South Africa's citrus exports to Russia remain unaffected by the war in Ukraine, Citrus Growers Association chief executive Justin Chadwick writes in his latest "From the Desk of the CEO" newsletter.

It's almost a year since Russia's attack on its western neighbour last February 25, and Chadwick says the CGA has watched with concern as the invasion has escalated.

"Between 8 and 10% of southern African citrus was exported to Russia."

"However, CGA representative in Russia, Mikhail Fateev, predicted that the invasion would have little impact on southern African citrus exports to Russia."

According to Chadwick, recent figures show that Fateev was correct.

"Contrary to all expectations, the volume of citrus exported to Russia in 2022 exceeded the previous three years' volumes."

"The decrease in exports of Valencia oranges and grapefruit was more than made up for by increases in mandarins, navel oranges and lemons."

However, as with all things in life, there's always a flip side to a good story.

Chadwick writes that exporters faced difficulty in getting shipments to Russia.

“As the season started, shipping opportunities were limited as sanctions impacted on trade flows.”

“The cost of shipping to Russia also increased considerably, resulting in poor returns to the grower from that market.”

“Most exports were shipped in specialised bulk reefer vessels – with a vessel loading out of Durban on a weekly basis, in most cases calling Port Elizabeth and Cape Town on its way out.”

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