

# South Africa's citrus export forecast stabilises

By [Fred Meintjes](#) | 16 September 2024

## The latest prediction for total exports is now slightly higher than the previous year at 165.5m cartons

South Africa is now likely to export more citrus this season than it did last year, with the latest prediction standing at 165.5m cartons.

Earlier in the season a strong juice market encouraged more growers to increase volumes to that sector, which led to the early season fresh prediction dropping from 181.7m cartons to the latest level.

Sources said that fresh market returns had improved on the back of perceived shortages for South African fruit developing in important markets.

“It is also unlikely that the South African citrus leaders will again this year announce an earlier closure of export inspections to Europe for all oranges as was the case the last few years,” noted one commentator.

“After many downward revisions by the Variety Focus Groups as the season unfolded, recently the trend has been for upward revisions as favourable market conditions encourage late season exports,” said the South African Citrus Growers’ Association (CGA) in its latest briefing document to the industry.

“The total packed and passed for export volume for 2024 is now slightly above 2023 levels, but well below the initial estimate and the Vision 260 levels,” it continued.

The main reason for not considering an early closure, which would primarily affect growers and exporters in the northern and eastern parts of the country, is reported to be lower interceptions for citrus black spot by European authorities than in previous seasons.

Some believe it also has something to do with the WTO proceedings between South Africa and the European Union, which is now moving to its final stages.

“Clearly, nobody wants to rock the boat to much in the light of the WTO process,” one source said.

**EUROFRUIT** be a perfectly normal marketing reason for keeping volumes flowing later into the season – fears of shortages in Europe due to normal supply conditions.

“When this happens, the economics speak and this may be what is happening here,” an observer outlined.

In any event, the South African export season is now moving towards its end – with growers in the Western Cape expected to complete shipments to the US in early October, and volumes cleared by the end of October.

Late season shipments to Europe and the UK are expected to continue for some time yet.

The grapefruit season ended on 15.2m cartons, higher than last year's 14.7m cartons.

Mandarin and soft citrus will show an increase from 38m cartons to 41.7m, lemons will be around 1m cartons short of last year's 35.6m, Navels will be stable at 24.9m, and Valencias are expected to reach 49.1m, about 2m cartons short of last year's volume.

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