

US port strike will not affect South Africa's conventional citrus shipments

By [Fred Meintjes](#) | 2 October 2024

Strike will impact late citrus containers, but the last conventional vessel of the season is expected to discharge without incident

The weekly South African conventional shipping programme for South African citrus to the US will conclude next week (week 41), when the last vessel is expected to discharge at the Port of Philadelphia.

Citrus sources have said the arrival and discharge of the vessel would not be affected by the [US port strike, currently hitting facilities across the East Coast](#).

Gerrit van der Merwe, chairman of the South African Citrus Growers' Association, said there were still considerable volumes of late season Valencias on container vessels headed for the US market.

"These volumes have been shipped in containers and will only be able to discharge once the ports start operation again," he outlined.

In general, it was not an easy season for Western Cape growers shipping to the US.

Rain and storms twice disrupted harvesting and packing, and at one point one vessel had to be cancelled.

"We lost some volume because of this and once this happens you never fully recover," Van der Merwe noted.

The South African citrus season normally concludes around the end of October, before the normal start of the US crop.

Fruit originates in the Western and Northern Cape regions, which are considered disease free by US authorities.

EUROFRUIT seasonal shipping programme has been in operation since the early 2000s and has enabled the South African citrus industry to carve out a significant share of the US market for imported fruit.

Overall, South Africa's citrus export volume is expected to reach around 165mn cartons, short of pre-season predictions.

High juice prices have taken some volume away from fresh fruit shipments, while unseasonal weather affected not just harvesting and packing but also shipping.

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