

Rise in South African citrus volumes predicted

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

The South African citrus industry will increase exports this year under challenging circumstances, with major issues still unresolved

As citrus exports from South Africa kick-off in earnest this month, with shipments of lemons, grapefruit and early soft citrus dominating, the industry is preparing for yet another rise in volumes.

“Overall, an increase in export volume is expected,” confirmed Citrus Growers’ Association (CGA) chief executive Justin Chadwick.

“This is a testament to the resilience of South African citrus growers, producing more citrus under challenging circumstances, such as steep increases in input costs, load shedding and deteriorating public infrastructure,” he commented. “This increase is also a result of younger trees coming into production across several regions.”

The CGA’s first forecast said that 37.9m cartons of lemons would be exported, an increase of 7 per cent year-on-year.

“This continues the upward curve of lemon exports, which has more than doubled since 2016,” Chadwick outlined.

Orange exports are also expected to increase, with predictions showing 4 per cent growth in Navels at 25.6m cartons.

“After two years of suppressed Valencia orange exports, production is likely to improve in 2024 and return to the long-term trajectory,” he continued. “This will result in an increase of 12 per cent to 58m cartons.”

However, the CGA’s Orange Focus Group highlighted that substantially higher returns were expected for fruit supplied to local processors, and that exports could be reduced by as much as 5 per cent which could affect the overall forecast.

Grapefruit exports are also expected to increase, back up to the long-term average. The predicted rise of 14 per cent on last year will move the category to 16.7m cartons.

“EUROFRUIT” export volume can partly be ascribed to processing fruit once again being exported to China, which was not the case last year,” Chadwick noted.

The Satsuma season was likely to close around the 1.7m mark, 16 per cent more than last year, while Clementines and Novas are set to reach 5.4m cartons (up 8 per cent) and 4.5m cartons (up 8 per cent) respectively, CGA noted.

Meanwhile, the association said it was too early to predict the late mandarin crop and a full estimate would be available later in the season.

“While the increase in predicted export volumes for the 2024 season places the industry on a stronger trajectory to achieve its long-term goals, severe challenges remain,” Chadwick added.

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