

# The future is here for South African citrus

By [Fred Meintjes](#) | 15 April 2024

## The CGA's Mitchell Brooke says the prospect of shipping significantly higher volumes of citrus from South Africa is very real

Increasing production towards Vision 260 in the South African citrus industry is very real and backed up by the 2024 export estimates.

The industry should therefore not shy away from the fact that a lot more citrus will need to be exported in the near future.

That was the view of Mitchell Brooke, senior executive at the Citrus Growers' Association (CGA), who is leading the industry's logistical planning.

"The tree census data and long-term crop projection model, not to omit what we see with our own eyes, highlights the number of hectares that have been planted over the last few years," he said.

Brooke said that there were sufficient hectares of trees at a mature age to produce 185m (15kg) cartons for short-term exports. He noted however that there were factors contributing both positively and negatively to the export volumes of any particular year.

The overall 2024 estimate has been pitched just above 180m cartons, which is an increase of 10 per cent on last year.

"This projected volume will be affected by harvesting and market dynamics as the season progresses," Brooke outlined.

From a corridor perspective, the northern regions of South Africa estimate of 91m cartons is up from a baseline of 82m cartons.

The Eastern Cape estimate of 52.5m cartons is up from 47.5m cartons. The Northern and Western Cape regions estimate of 38m cartons is up from 36m cartons and an increase of 6 per cent for the western corridor.

EUROFRUIT point out that the CGA initiative around integration, collaboration, information and communication is of paramount importance when it comes to logistics and shipping,” he noted.

Given the infrastructure, capacity and equipment demands that the industry faces, coupled with the problem of port container terminal productivity and operational challenges, the industry and logistical service providers will need to strongly support this initiative.

It is aimed at fostering an environment of information sharing that enables the identification of hotspots in the ecosystem. This will introduce contingencies and troubleshooting mechanisms to overcome identified constraints.

Closer collaboration is seen as a necessary mechanism to ensure the logistics and shipping capabilities are enabled to carry the industry forward.

If it is successful, everybody potentially wins – especially the country of South Africa.

“We are also seeking much more collaboration on two important short-term strategic projects,” Brooke continued.

“Firstly, there is no getting away from the fact that transporting citrus by rail from hinterland and port precincts is fundamentally important. Former Transnet Freight Rail Executive Jan-Louis Spoelstra has been appointed to guide the citrus industry on the changing rail landscape and to navigate the path for progressive implementation of rail-aligned projects.”

The CGA and FPEF (Fresh Produce Exporters' Association) have also agreed to coordinate a working group aligned to the development of exporting increasing volume of citrus from the Maputo port in Mozambique.

“We have seen a significant uptake of containers of citrus being routed from Maputo to the Middle East and Bangladesh in 2023,” he confirmed. “In the short term, this can be increased and expanded to more destinations in greater Asia, the Far East and Southeast Asian countries that do not require pre-clearance or cold treatment measures.”

Future expansion of exports from Maputo lies firmly with the development of infrastructure and capacity to enable exports to markets that do require additional measures – particularly China but not limited to that country alone, he added.