

Netting can play a positive role in South African citrus farming

The adoption of netting in agriculture, specifically within the South African citrus sector, has seen a notable increase, driven by its efficacy in hail protection and its positive impact on packout rates. Research from Citrus Research International (CRI) underscores the advantages of netting, including yield enhancement, quicker maturity, lower production costs, and improved risk management.

Paul Cronjé, a CRI researcher, emphasized the significance of these benefits against the backdrop of expanding citrus plantings in South Africa and the uncertain future of market capacities and profit margins. Moreover, Cronjé pointed out the looming challenge of climate change, with projections indicating a substantial effect on the region, characterized by temperature fluctuations and extreme weather conditions, which could exacerbate issues like reduced fruit size, increased water usage, and cosmetic damage to fruits. The strategic adoption of shade-netting, as highlighted by Cronjé, emerges as a crucial factor in mitigating climate and market-related risks, potentially expanding the viability of citrus cultivation to new areas and enhancing orchard conditions to improve fruit quality through moderated light intensity, wind speed, and temperature extremes.

Source: farmersweekly.co.za (<https://www.farmersweekly.co.za/crops/fruit-and-nuts/increase-citrus-yield-packouts-and-quality-with-shade-nets/>)

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