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Orange export volumes will be lower than initially expected – CGA

30TH MAY 2024 BY: MARLENY ARNOLDI - DEPUTY EDITOR ONLINE

The Citrus Growers' Association of Southern Africa (CGA) has revised downward its estimates for Navel orange exports this season to 22-million 15 kg cartons.

The association initially expected 25.6-million cartons to be exported, but had to revise this estimate by 14.5% following consideration of factors brought up by the Orange Focus Group.

The export estimate for this season's oranges is also 11% lower than that of last year when South Africa exported 24.8-million cartons of Navel oranges.

Navels make up about 17% of the entire South African citrus export volume.

The projected export figure of 15 kg cartons of Valencia oranges has also been reduced to just over 56-million, which is a 4% reduction from the estimate at the beginning of the season.

It is, however, early in the Valencia season and a further reduction is possible.

Last year, South Africa packed 52-million cartons of Valencias for shipping to foreign markets. Valencias make up about 31% of total citrus export volumes.

The CGA explains that local citrus juicing prices are currently high, which many growers are taking advantage of.

Fruit sizes are also somewhat smaller owing to the warm and dry weather experienced in large parts of the country.

This means there are more individual fruit packed into a 15 kg carton relative to last year.

Severe winds have also caused some fruit to drop from trees in the Western Cape and hail damage has been experienced in certain parts of the Senwes (Groblersdal and Marble Hall) region.

An increase of Egyptian oranges in the European market also plays a role. Even though Egypt is counter-seasonal to South Africa, more Egyptian oranges in the European market – as they are at present – does impact early season demand for South Africa's citrus.

Importantly, the CGA states, the overall increase in orange production in South Africa is set to continue on a gradual growth trajectory for the next ten years.

However, a larger 2024 crop does not necessarily mean that an excessive volume of oranges will be shipped to export markets, making the risk of oversupply low.
