Citrus export season shows promising growth

By Jyothi Laldas | 12 April 2024 | 1:37 pm

The 2024 citrus export season is underway, and early forecasts indicate a notable uptick in export volumes. The Citrus Growers' Association of Southern Africa (CGA) unveiled these projections at a recent Citrus Marketing Forum.

Citrus growers anticipate a fruitful 2024 export season, with increased volumes projected.
Photo: FW Archive

According to CGA CEO Justin Chadwick, the expected increase is a testament to the resilience of South African citrus growers, who produce high volumes of citrus under challenging circumstances, such as steep increases in input costs, load-shedding and deteriorating public infrastructure.

Chadwick said the increase was also a result of younger trees coming into production across a number of regions.

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According to CGA estimates, the current prediction is that 37,9 million 15kg cartons of lemons will be exported to key markets, which is an increase of 7% over last year.

"This continues the upward curve of lemon exports, which has more than doubled since 2016," Chadwick said.

He said predictions show a 4% increase in export volume for navel oranges, with 25,6 million 15kg cartons expected to be packed.

"After two years of suppressed Valencia orange exports, production is likely to improve in 2024 and return to the long-term trajectory. An increase on 2023 export volumes of 12% to 58 million cartons is projected."

However, the Orange Focus Group highlighted that due to substantially higher returns expected for fruit being supplied to local processors, exports could be reduced by up to 5%. "This has not been factored into the forecast of 58 million cartons," Chadwick said.

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Grapefruit exports are also predicted to increase, returning to the long-term average. "The 14% growth figure translates into 16,7 million cartons. The increased export volume can partly be ascribed to processing fruit (PP class) once again being exported to China, which was not the case last year," he said.

"The satsuma season is likely to close around the 1,7 million mark, up 16%, while clementines and novas are expected to reach 5,4 million, up 8%, and 4,5 million, up 8%, respectively."

Chadwick said it was too early to tell what the late mandarin crop would be at this stage and a full estimate would be available later in the season.

Speaking about the harvest, he said the quality of the fruit for 2024 looked to be excellent and timing for harvesting was expected to be typical.

"Recent dry conditions in the northern growing regions could mean that fruit sizes might be somewhat smaller than in 2023, but late rains could change this. Meetings with the variety focus groups are held on a regular basis to track estimates and any final data on fruit sizes will be communicated when available."

Jyothi Laldas

Jyothi Laldas is an accomplished journalist with 15 years of experience in the news media industry. She has established herself as a respected voice in the field, known for her keen insights and passion for storytelling. Jyothi grew up on a farm in rural KwaZulu-Natal, a background that instilled in her a deep appreciation for hard work and the importance of community. Her passion for writing and learning about people has been a driving force throughout her career, enabling her to connect with her audience and bring important stories to light. Jyothi's journalistic journey has been marked by her dedication to providing accurate and impactful reporting on a range of topics.