

Further falls for South African orange export crop

By [Fred Meintjes](#) | 24 July 2024

Shipments now at levels last seen in 2017 due to adverse climate and high juice prices

South Africa's Citrus Growers' Association (CGA) is reporting further falls in exports of Navel and Valencia oranges in the 2024 season due to bad weather.

Shipments of Navels are now projected to reach 21m (15kg) cartons, down from the revised forecast of 22m cartons and 19 per cent below initial estimates of 25.7m cartons. Currently, late Navels are being packed and shipped as the Navel season draws to a close.

The latest project volume of Valencias is 51.6m (15kg) cartons, down from May's estimate of 56m cartons and the season-opening estimate of 58m cartons.

Meanwhile, exports are once again beginning to flow out of the Olifants River Valley in the Western Cape where recent storms have devastated infrastructure and harvesting and packing had been disrupted.

"Inclement weather over the past two weeks has meant further reduction in predicted volumes," said Stiaan Engelbrecht, chairman of the Orange Focus Group.

"The freezing cold in the Senwes region has meant that the Navel estimate in that region has been reduced by 600,000 cartons and Valencisa by 1m cartons. The Western Cape (Citrusdal) has been impacted by recent flooding and storms, while the Eastern Cape has been impacted by high winds."

Storms and winds cause fruit to drop from trees, while frost damage also has also impacted production.

"It is now clear that there will not be an oversupply of oranges this season. We are looking at a balanced market," said Jan-Louis Pretorius, vice chairman of the CGA and a citrus grower in Limpopo.

EUROFRUIT s, the season is well underway in key growing regions in Limpopo and Mpumalanga, while growers in the Eastern- and Western Cape will only start to pack their first Valencia volumes in earnest in the coming weeks.

“These adjusted figures tell the story of a unique season. Firstly, drier and warmer conditions caused fruit sizes to be somewhat smaller. Secondly, a very good local juicing price enticed growers to move more oranges to processing. Thirdly, the bad weather of the past two and a half weeks caused challenges. The last time the industry was looking at similar orange figures was during the 2017 season, especially remembered for the Western Cape drought,” Pretorius explained.

The CGA said that while the financial damage to infrastructure caused by the floods in Citrusdal has not yet been calculated, export oranges have started moving out of the town in the past few days through a private bridge on a citrus farm after the valley was cut off. A provincial disaster was declared after severe rainfall two weeks ago.

The CGA added the Port of Cape Town is back to operating efficiently. CGA chairman Gerrit van der Merwe, himself a grower in Citrusdal, praised the cooperation and resilience of the local community.

EUROFRUIT

“Citrus is now moving and disruption has been minimised. People are working hard and can catch up with the delays in about eight to nine days,” he said.

