

IMPORTS AND EXPORTS

Orange export projections continue to decrease

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Orange fruit export projections for South Africa have been downwardly adjusted for both navels and Valencias for the second time this season, the Citrus Growers' Association (CGA) reports.

CGA chief executive Justin Chadwick writes that "a further downward adjustment was made to the latest projected export figures for navels, while the category for Valencia oranges received its biggest projection cut of the season, mostly driven by recently reported extreme weather events in key growing regions."

This emerged after the CGA's Orange Focus Group (OFG) met on July 23 to review export estimates of oranges.

Initially it was anticipated that 25.7 million 15-kilogram cartons of navels would be exported, but the projection was reduced to 22m.

A second estimate reduction now projects exports to be about 21m 15kg cartons.

Chadwick said: "This latest review brings the total reduction for the season to a significant 19%."

“Currently, late navels are being packed and shipped as the season draws to a close.”

Regarding Valencia exports, April’s season-opening estimate was that 58m 15kg cartons would be exported. In May this figure was adjusted to 56m, followed by another reduction to 51.6m, the current export projection.

“This is an 11% reduction from the first estimate,” Chadwick said.

“For Valencia oranges, key growing regions in Limpopo and Mpumalanga are well under way with their season, while growers in the Eastern and Western Cape will only start to pack their first Valencia volumes in earnest in the coming weeks.”

Chadwick added that the largest downward adjustments reflected in the latest review had come out of Letsitele, Hoedspruit and the Senwes (Marble Hall and Groblersdal) areas, where the season’s production trends had already revealed themselves.

Marble Hall and Groblersdal were also hard hit by recent frost damage, further reducing production forecasts.

OFG chair Stiaan Engelbrecht said bad weather conditions had affected growers significantly.

“Inclement weather over the past two weeks has meant further reduction in predicted volumes.

“The freezing cold in the Senwes region has meant that the navel estimate in that region has been reduced by 600 000 cartons and Valencia volumes by one million cartons. The Western Cape (Citrusdal) has been impacted by recent flooding and storms, while the Eastern Cape has been impacted by high winds.”

CGA vice chair who farms citrus in Limpopo, Jan-Louis Pretorius, said: “It is now clear that there will not be an oversupply of oranges this season.”

However, he added that they were looking at a balanced market.

“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.”

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