

U.S. tariffs threaten 35,000 South Africa citrus industry jobs

In a press release responding to the U.S. imposed tariffs, the Citrus Growers Association of South Africa said the new 30% tariff on South African exports endangers 35,000 jobs connected to the industry and is a significant threat to South African citrus farms and the rural communities they support.



To avoid job and revenue losses in the industry, and with South African farmers starting to pack citrus destined for the U.S. market this week, growers urged the South African government to prioritize immediate negotiations with the U.S. on tariff reductions or exemptions on citrus.

The response comes after U.S. President Donald Trump imposed a 31% tariff on U.S. imports from South Africa on April 2. That same day, Trump announced a baseline tariff of 10% on all U.S. imports.

In addition to job losses, the new tariffs would place an additional \$4.25 per carton on SA citrus in the U.S. and, the statement adds, make SA citrus uncompetitive in the U.S. market "especially since only the baseline US tariff of 10% will be levied on South Africa's citrus competitors, who are mostly situated in South America."

South Africa's citrus industry is the second-largest fruit exporter after Spain and exports. The country's U.S. citrus exports have almost doubled since 2017, with over 6.5 million cartons designated to the country.

The organization estimates that 20,000 jobs up and down the U.S. supply chain are linked to the US-SA citrus trade and that the relationship with the country is one of the CGA's targets to create 100,000 additional jobs by 2032.

In a statement, the Chairperson of the CGA and a citrus grower in the Olifants River Valley, Gerrit van der Merwe, said that "although South Africa only exports about 5% - 6% of our citrus to the U.S., many rural communities in the Western and Northern Cape are heavily dependent on U.S. exports. A prime example is Citrusdal, where U.S. exports form this vibrant town's economic heart. The severity and immediate nature of the impending tariffs could mean that towns like it now face increased unemployment or even total economic collapse. There is immense anxiety in our communities."