

U.S. tariff deadline threatens South African citrus exports

U.S. consumers and citrus growers in South Africa's Western and Northern Cape face the impact of a proposed 30% tariff on South African imports by the Trump administration. The measure, set to take effect on Friday, 1 August, could affect millions of cartons of citrus prepared for export.

South African citrus growers are anticipating a record season. According to the Citrus Growers Association (CGA), the industry expects to export 180 million 15kg cartons in 2025, more than 9% higher than 2024's 164.6 million cartons and above the 2023 record of 165.1 million cartons. South Africa is the world's second-largest citrus exporter after Spain, with the industry supporting foreign exchange earnings, employment, and a value chain that includes carton manufacturing, agricultural input suppliers, and local vendors. The sector employs approximately 140,000 people.

The CGA warns that the 30% tariff could reduce the projected record exports, particularly for citrus grown in the Northern and Western Cape for the U.S. market. These two provinces ship about seven million cartons annually to the U.S.

"This week, with the tariff deadline on Friday, is one of great anxiety for the citrus growers in the Western and Northern Cape. These two provinces annually export about seven million cartons to the U.S.," said Dr Boitshoko Ntshabele, CEO of the CGA.

"The CGA has asked President Ramaphosa to urgently facilitate an extension of the current 10% U.S. tariff beyond 1 August," the statement continued.

The CGA noted that "seasonal fresh produce is perishable and cannot be stored for extended periods, like other trade products. The midpoint of the 2025 export season has just passed, which means hundreds of thousands of cartons of citrus are ready in packhouses to be shipped to the U.S. over the next few weeks. The implementation of a 30% tariff on 1 August will mean most of this fruit will be left unsold."

While the fruit would not be discarded, with charitable distribution as a possible channel, the CGA said U.S. consumers would lose access to South African citrus during their domestic off-season. Citrus from South Africa is supplied to the U.S. during the northern hemisphere summer, when local U.S. production is unavailable.

"South African citrus growers do not pose a threat to U.S. growers or jobs, as the produce sustains demand when local U.S. citrus is out of season, benefiting U.S. consumers," the CGA said.

Source: Daily Maverick (<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2025-07-30-sa-citrus-eyes-record-export-of-180m-cartons-but-trump-tariffs-may-prune-that-estimate/>)

Frontpage photo: © Yar Photographer | Dreamstime

Publication date: Mon 11 Aug 2025

-
-

