

Citrus export estimates revised upward as demand surges

South Africa's citrus industry has revised its 2025 export outlook sharply upward, with 1 million cartons now expected to be shipped — a 10% increase on initial projections. The latest figures, released by the Citrus Growers' Association of Southern Africa (CGA), reflect stronger international demand, favourable growing conditions and improved efficiency across the value chain.



Source: Couleur via [Pixabay](#)

The revised outlook includes 29.6 million cartons of Navel oranges, up 11% from the original 26.1 million estimate, while Valencia volumes have risen 4% to 54.5 million cartons. Navel packing has peaked, with Valencia harvesting continuing into September.

Sizing has varied, with larger fruit from northern regions and smaller from the south balancing out match market preferences.

Mandarins and lemons exceed expectations

Mandarin estimates rose from 44.9 million to 49.3 million cartons, an increase of 9%. The late mandarin types are currently being packed, while Satsuma and Clementine seasons have closed.

For lemons, the projection was lifted to 39.6 million cartons following a strong third set and continuing global demand.

Grapefruit season winds down

The grapefruit export season has effectively ended at 15 million cartons, slightly below the original 15.3 million estimate. Despite this, demand was stronger than in 2024, and some markets reported excellent uptake.

"The sector continues to work closely with its partners to ensure steady and stable delivery to all markets. Industry leaders remain focused on delivering a successful season," said Dr Boitshoko Ntshabele, CGA CEO.

He added that while volumes align with the association's long-term growth strategy, market expansion is crucial: "Volumes alone are of course just one metric with which to gauge an industry. Apart from trade turmoil, rising input costs and the EU's continued unscientific and unfair plant health trade barriers are also impacting our growers.

"With the projection of 188.2 million cartons for 2025, our industry is on course to achieve our target. But for jobs to be created out of these volumes, the new citrus must find markets. Therefore, market retention and expansion are essential."

The CGA has set a 2032 target of 260 million cartons annually, with the potential to add 100,000 jobs if markets are secured.

Port efficiency and US tariff

Paul Hardman, CGA's chief operating officer, noted improved port operations this year: "In general, ports have been much more efficient in 2025, in part due to added equipment and new management strategies. This has helped get fruit out a little earlier than usual. However, with a larger projected volume, it will be important to keep the fruit moving through the ports swiftly over the next three weeks."

On the recent 30% US tariff, Dr Ntshabele said growers managed to speed up shipments ahead of the 7 August deadline: "The Southern Hemisphere's citrus is well past its peak, and local citrus growers have managed to accelerate shipments to the US ahead of the deadline, which has lessened some of the effects of the tariff on the current season's US exports.

"But should a mutually beneficial trade deal not be concluded, our next export season will unfortunately feel the full effect of the tariff. Rural communities could then be hit hard."