

South African lemon exports surge to 41.5mn cartons

By [Fred Meintjes](#) | 4 December 2025

The industry overcame challenging weather conditions to deliver volumes 26 per cent higher than initial estimates



South African lemon producers recorded a rise in exports this year after turning out much better than pre-season predictions.

The industry shipped 41.5mn cartons, ending a campaign of notably higher volumes during which markets also held up well.

In its final review of the season, the Citrus Growers' Association (CGA) said it began with expectations of a reduced crop due to adverse climatic conditions, including frost and hail across several key growing regions.

“The initial consolidated estimate in March was 32.9mn cartons,” CGA stated.

The largest growing region, the Sundays River Valley, surprised initial forecasters when they packed 17.1mn cartons, ending 30 per cent above the estimate.

The northern Senwes region, the second largest for lemons in South Africa, also excelled by packing 44 per cent more than originally expected.

The CGA said projections were revised upwards throughout the season, and the better crops resulted from an improvement in fruit size.

Picking and packing was delayed early in the season due to weather, but the second and third crop sets were strong, ranging between 2mn and 2.6mn cartons weekly.

“Young orchards continue contributing to increased production – with 31 per cent of the total hectares now between six to ten years old, and 15 per cent between one to five years old,” the association noted.

This season, the CGA also saw a 12 per cent increase in the volume of processing grade fruit packed for export.

Europe remains the leading market for Southern African lemons, receiving 16.4mn cartons in 2025.

Exports to the Middle East rose from 11mn cartons in 2024 to 12.8mn in 2025.

Exports to Russia increased slightly from 2.7mn to 2.9mn cartons.

Shipments to Southeast Asia reached 2.4mn cartons, a significant increase from 1.3mn cartons in 2024.