

South African citrus exports up 22% in 2025

South Africa's citrus exports have reached record levels in 2025, increasing by 22 per cent compared with the previous season. The final volume also exceeded the original April estimate of 171.2 million cartons by 19 per cent. The Citrus Growers' Association of Southern Africa (CGA) attributes the increase to stable weather conditions, overseas demand, and improved port performance.

Additional drivers include higher demand for processing-grade juicing oranges and lemons, as well as an early end to Northern Hemisphere supply, which extended key sales weeks at the start of the South African season.

CGA CEO Dr Boitshoko Ntshabele notes that growth in export volume does not reflect the full state of the sector. "It must be noted that volume is just one single measure with which to assess an industry," Ntshabele says. "Our growers continue to face challenges, including unpredictable price and market dynamics, rising input costs, as well as market access issues such as high tariffs and unscientific plant health measures."

Ntshabele says the 30 per cent tariff imposed by the United States on South African citrus had a limited impact this season due to its late introduction, but it remains a concern. "We remain very worried about the impact of the 30% tariff on the coming 2026 season. That is why a mutually beneficial trade deal between the United States and South Africa must be finalized urgently."

CGA chairperson Gerrit van der Merwe highlights the need for broader market access. "It's imperative that the government actively pursues improved market access in China, India, Japan, South Korea, the European Union, and the United States. These markets represent real growth opportunities for South African citrus, which is globally recognized for its quality and taste."

Agricultural economist Wandile Sihlobo says export activity across multiple products has been supported by higher production volumes and improved port logistics. Agriculture Ministry spokesperson Joylene van Wyk told Forbes Africa that the recorded export figure demonstrates the sector's role in the national

economy. "Hitting over 203 million cartons for the export market is a powerful indicator of the sector's vital role in our economy, its capacity to create jobs, and its contribution to our country's foreign earnings," she says.

The Ministry states it will continue to support efforts to expand access in India, China, and the Middle East while maintaining current markets.

Source: Forbes Africa (<https://www.forbesafrica.com/current-affairs/2025/12/03/globally-famous-south-african-citrus-exports-smash-records-with-22-high-this-year-but-2026-may-prove-less-fruitful>)

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