

Wind delays affect early season Cape Town citrus shipments

By [Fred Meintjes](#) | 27 February 2025

A shift in the production of lemons to earlier growing regions has put more emphasis on Cape Town for shipments to northwest Europe



Most South African growers and exporters are now familiar with the delays at the Cape Town port during the peak of the deciduous fruit summer season's exports.

Changes in production seasons mean that the wind problem is now also affecting early lemon growers and exporters.

"These delays are typically a factor of the wind disrupting the port's container terminal operations and have never been a major issue for the citrus industry," said Mitchell Brooke, senior executive at the South African Citrus Growers' Association (CGA).

“EUROFRUIT”ed due to the earlier production of lemons and exports commencing from week 2 and gaining momentum from week 5.”

Many of the early season lemons are exported to the Middle East, with 30 per cent of production targeted at other Northern Hemisphere destinations such as Canada, the EU and Russia.

“It is important to note that vessels departing Durban, Coega and Gqeberha on the Eastern and Southern coast, with planned routing via Cape Town, are currently delayed by up to two weeks prior to departing Cape Town onward to their destination,” Brooke continued.

“An analysis of the current delay in Cape Town shows that lemons packed and shipped in week 5, will likely arrive at destination in week 12, some 50 days after harvesting.”

There were vessels departing Durban that bypass Cape Town directly to their destination, an option worth considering, he noted.

According the CGA, gross earnings for the citrus industry increased from R1bn in 2000 to almost R34bn in 2023.

In the same period export volumes increased from 700,000 tonnes to over 2.4mn tonnes.

Local market sales showed more moderate increases from 137,000 to 163,000 tonnes; and processed from 270,000 to 830,000 tonnes.

