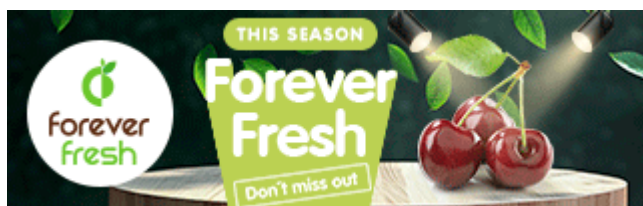


2024 Southern citrus season falls short

By **Betina Ernst**, president of [Top Info](#)



After several successful years of export growth, the 2024 Southern citrus season did not follow that trend. Total citrus exports from the Southern Hemisphere fell, primarily due to reduced supply from South Africa.

South Africa, by far the largest exporter of fresh citrus in the Southern Hemisphere, accounts for two-thirds of the region's total (2.23 million tons).

The country is traditionally the leading exporter of Southern oranges and grapefruit. In recent years, it has also excelled in mandarins and lemons, thanks to the significant expansion of its crops. This growth trend remains promising, as some cultivated areas have not yet reached maximum production.

However, initial high expectations for the current season were not met. Weather, logistical, market, and cost issues made it impossible to achieve the forecasted export levels. Weather challenges included contradictory conditions such as heat waves and frosts, droughts and floods, and strong winds.

At the same time, harvested citrus encountered transportation problems to ports, as well as storage and loading delays.

In the primary market, the European Union, exporters faced increased competition from Mediterranean products. Stricter phytosanitary requirements, particularly for oranges, presented additional challenges for Southern Hemisphere exporters.

The Asian market reacted slowly and demanded less citrus than anticipated. In the United States, South Africa's citrus exports remain minor due to restrictions limiting shipments to certain producing regions and stringent phytosanitary protocols.

Meanwhile, the orange juice industry offered highly attractive prices last year. As a result, volumes previously destined for export were redirected to juice production.

Other fresh citrus-exporting countries demonstrated relatively stable situations in recent years. Chile is the second-largest Southern Hemisphere citrus exporter, with total shipments of between 350,000 and 400,000 tons.

In the 2024 season, performance varied by fruit type. The most exported citrus fruits are mandarins, clementines, and later varieties. However, unfavorable weather conditions led to a 21% decrease in shipments, which dropped to 183,000 tons, failing to maintain the 2023 record.

The situation was different for lemons, which recovered after two difficult years. Oranges also saw a slight increase in exports compared to previous years.

Peru ranks third among citrus exporters and exceeded previous years' volumes to achieve export records in 2024. About 80% of its shipments are mandarins, with total citrus exports reaching

219,000 tons. Other citrus categories, including limes and oranges, also set records.

Argentina is the fourth-largest exporter, primarily of lemons. However, lemons are facing a significant crisis due to global oversupply, resulting in continued reductions in fresh exports.

Additionally, Argentina's lemon industry, which accounts for 70% of its citrus production, is in a critical state. The sweet citrus sector plays a secondary role, and despite recovering exports, it could not compensate for the decline in lemon exports.

Australia exports around 200,000 to 250,000 tons of sweet citrus to Asia. This year, adverse weather reduced exportable volumes compared to previous years.

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