

South African citrus growers appeal to president Ramaphosa as punitive US tariffs loom on 1 August

By [Fred Meintjes](#) | 29 July 2025

The Citrus Growers' Association warns that the implementation of 30 per cent tariffs on 1 August will devastate exports, threatening thousands of jobs and the economic stability of rural communities in Western and Northern Cape provinces

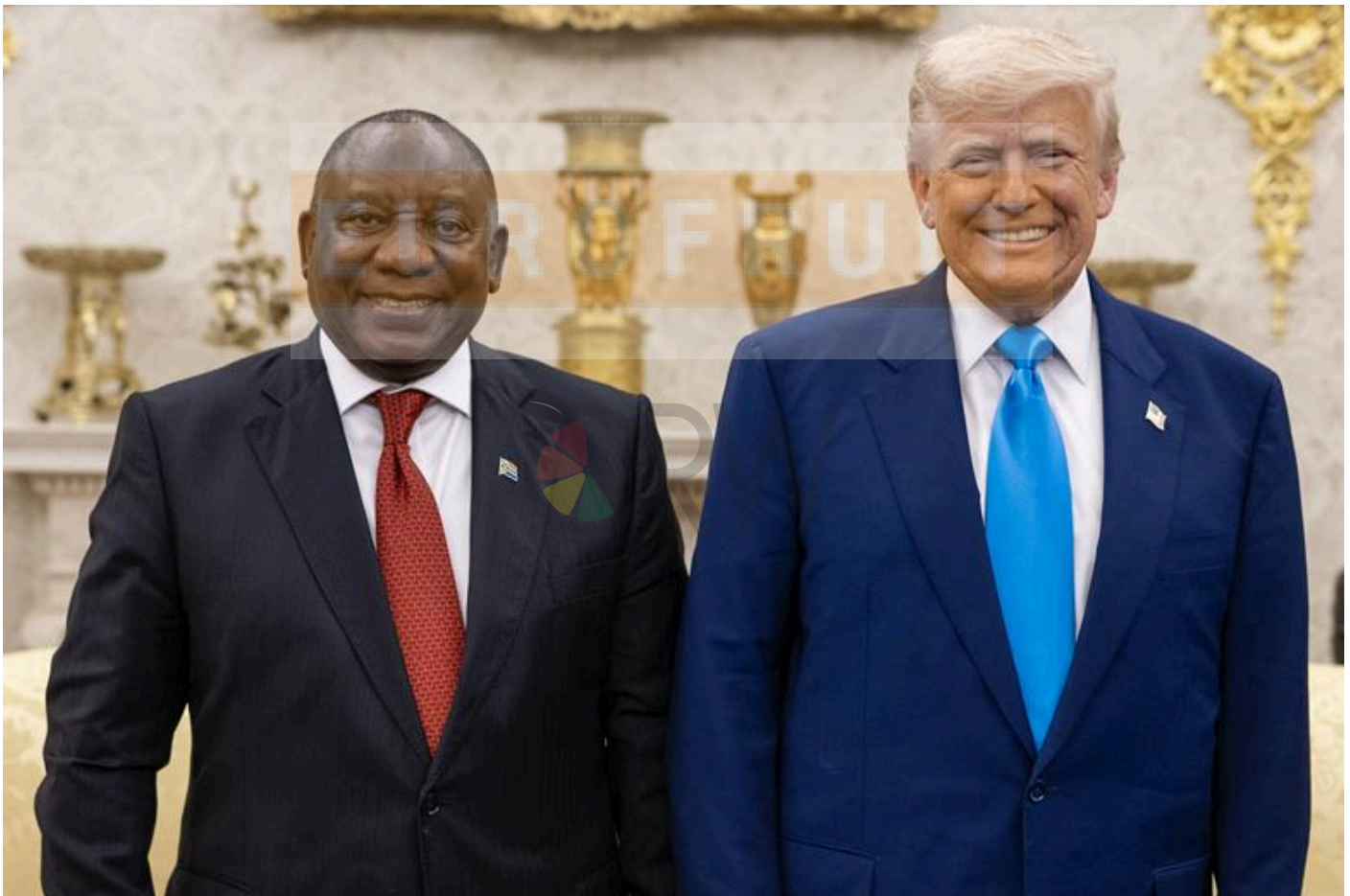


Image: The White House

South Africa's citrus industry has taken last minutes steps to try and prevent, or at least postpone, punitive US tariffs which will come into effect on Friday 1 August.

The Citrus Growers' Association (CGA) has asked South African president Cyril Ramaphosa to urgently facilitate an extension of the current 10 per cent US tariff beyond 1 August, which would

allow for negotiations towards a mutually beneficial trade agreement.

The CGA also requested that, if a general extension of the deadline is not possible, an urgent request for a specific extension for seasonal fresh produce should be secured.

It pointed out that seasonal fresh produce is perishable and cannot be stored for extended periods, like other trade products.

The looming tariffs on fresh produce is just one of the many major issues on the table of the South African president.

The government is embroiled in a police scandal which is threatening the stability of the country, along with a great deal of pressure on the majority ANC party to deal with alleged widespread fraud and other security issues.

Where solving tariffs and other issues of trade sits on the President's to-do list before Friday remains to be seen.

The CGA points out that the 2025 citrus export season has just passed its midpoint, which means hundreds of thousands of cartons of citrus fruit are ready in packhouses to be shipped to the US over the next few weeks.

The implementation of a 30 per cent tariff on 1 August will mean most of this fruit will be left unsold.

"This week, with the tariff deadline on Friday, is one of great anxiety for the citrus growers in the Western and Northern Cape," said Boitshoko Ntshabele, chief executive of the CGA.

"These two provinces annually export about 7mn cartons of citrus fruit to the USA."

He pointed out that South African citrus growers do not pose a threat to US growers or jobs, as the produce sustains demand when local US citrus is out of season, benefiting local consumers.

"Citrus as a source of nutrition also helps to keep America healthy," Ntshabele outlined.

"Should we not be able to secure a favourable trade deal, or the concession for fresh produce, local job losses before the next season will be a certainty."

Gerrit van der Merwe, chairman of the CGA, said that as a grower in Citrusdal in the Western Cape, he is very worried about the effect the tariffs will have on his town and the wider Cederberg municipality.

“City of Cape Town” economic heart of the area,” he explained. “Not just farmers and farm workers will feel the impact, local businesses and even the funding of social support programmes will be affected as well.

”The social fabric of some rural towns in the Western and Northern Cape is being threatened.”

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