

South Africa projects steady citrus exports for 2025 season

Ahead of the 2025 citrus export season, set to begin in April, the Citrus Growers' Association of Southern Africa (CGA) has released its official export volume projections. In a media statement, Boitshoko Ntshabele, CEO of the CGA, said the industry expects a stable and balanced season. "Exports are forecast to align with the five-year average," Ntshabele stated. "This points to a well-managed supply situation, with no significant oversupply or undersupply expected."

Lemon exports are forecast at 32.9 million 15kg cartons, a 5% decrease from 2024. "We're seeing reduced volumes from key production areas such as the Sundays River Valley, Senwes, Boland, and Patensie," said CGA Chairperson Gerrit van der Merwe. "However, Hoedspruit is showing improved output." Early shipments have already begun, particularly to the Middle East, Russia, and Canada.



© CGA Boitshoko Ntshabele, CEO of the CGA

Navel orange exports are expected to rise 5% to 26.1 million cartons. For the first time, estimates are divided into Early/Mid Navels (11.34 million cartons) and Late Navels (14.75 million cartons).

Valencia orange exports are projected to grow by 6% to 52 million cartons, reversing a trend of slight annual declines. "High juicing prices kept many Valentinas in the local market in 2024," van der Merwe explained.

Grapefruit exports are also set to increase by 6% to 13.5 million 17kg cartons, with peak shipments expected between mid-April and mid-May. "We've launched a new campaign in Europe focused on increasing grapefruit consumption among younger consumers," van der Merwe noted.

Mandarin exports show mixed results. "The Satsuma season is expected to match last year's 1.8 million cartons," he said. "Nova volumes are set to decline slightly by 2% to 4.5 million cartons, while Clementines will likely grow by 10% to 5.4 million cartons."

The CGA maintains its target of reaching 260 million cartons in annual exports by 2032, a milestone that could generate 100,000 new jobs. However, logistics and regulatory challenges remain key concerns. "Port and rail inefficiencies are costing the industry R5.27 billion each year," said CGA Logistics Development Manager Mitchell Brooke. "While recent equipment upgrades by Transnet are welcome, only structural reform and stronger public sector involvement will bring lasting efficiency."

Phytosanitary restrictions imposed by the European Union, especially those related to Citrus Black Spot (CBS) and False Coddling Moth (FCM), remain a significant barrier. "These measures cost growers at least R3.7 billion annually and disproportionately affect emerging farmers," said outgoing CGA CEO Justin Chadwick.

Despite these hurdles, the CGA remains optimistic. "We're confident in the strength and potential of South African citrus," concluded Ntshabele. "With quality fruit, dedicated growers, and strategic focus, we're well positioned for a successful 2025 season and beyond."

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