

SA exports first lemons of 2025 to India

The first shipment of South African lemons for the 2025 season has arrived in India, marking an important step for the country's citrus export industry. The shipment also marks the first time FruitOne, a South African citrus cultivation and export company, has exported lemons to India.



Source: Supplied

"We are delighted to announce the arrival of the first shipment of South African lemons in India for this season," said Boitshoko Ntshabele, CEO of the Citrus Growers' Association of Southern Africa (CGA). "This shipment signifies the strong trade relationship between South Africa and India. It starts the 2025 season and hopefully also starts an era of increased exports and opportunities for our two countries."

India's role in SA citrus exports

Learndt van der Burgh, Head of Commercial at FruitOne, highlighted the importance of India as a growing market for South African fruit: "India, just because of its sheer population size and its growing middle class, is important to South African fruit's future. The FruitOne brand is known in India, and we need to supply the whole citrus basket to this market. Adding Lemons to this basket in 2025 is a big step forward in this regard."

The shipment, which consists of 1600 cartons of lemons, arrived at Jawaharlal Nehru Port aboard vessel Navios Verde and was received by Indian importers IG International.

Sachin Khurana, the CGA's trade representative in India, commented on the growing appreciation of South African citrus in the Indian market: "In India, there is a noticeable appreciation of South African citrus and its juiciness, vibrant colour, and fresh flavour. For five months of the year—when the produce of India's citrus growers is out of season—South Africa sustains Indian consumers."

South Africa also exports oranges, mandarins, and grapefruit to India.

Barriers to growth: Import tariffs

Ntshabele pointed out the significant increase in citrus exports to India in recent years, though he noted the challenges that remain. "Since 2020, citrus exports have almost tripled to 30,000 tonnes. However, a steep citrus import tariff of 30% keeps South African growers and the citrus-loving Indian consumer from benefiting even more," Ntshabele said.

He expressed hope that the progress made in trade relations between South Africa and India would continue.

South Africa's citrus industry is targeting expanded market access, with plans to increase exports to 260 million 15kg cartons by 2032. The growth strategy is expected to generate around 100,000 jobs and bolster the country's export-driven economy.

A delegation from Fruit SA, including representatives from the Citrus Growers' Association, will travel to India for trade discussions. The group is set to engage with Indian government officials, the South African High Commission, and industry stakeholders at the Fresh Produce India trade event in Mumbai.

The outlook for the 2025 South African lemon season remains strong, with export volumes projected at 32.9 million cartons. Industry forecasts indicate a well-balanced market with improved fruit sizes compared to the previous year.

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