

South Africa emphasises market access in citrus trade

In the context of trade uncertainty, Citrus Growers' Association (CGA) chief executive officer Dr Boitshoko Ntshabele said that expanding market access remains central to the growth of both the citrus industry and the broader economy.

Speaking at the Agbiz roundtable discussion in the Western Cape, Ntshabele highlighted the importance of trust, respect, and safety in discussions between stakeholders. He outlined the "Gain, Retain, and Optimise" (GRO) strategy, which focuses on expanding, maintaining, and improving market access through compliance and research.

Gain refers to the expansion into new markets through science-based access protocols. Retain focuses on maintaining existing markets through quality, sustainability, and compliance. Optimise involves improving current market protocols through continuous research and development.

Ntshabele said that the citrus sector remains a driver of transformation, inclusion, and growth. The industry's Vision 260 aims to export 260 million 15 kg cartons by 2032, with the potential to create 100,000 additional jobs. "This alignment provides a framework for collaboration between industry and government, ensuring inclusive growth, transformation, and global competitiveness. Behind every carton of citrus shipped are communities that depend on this industry for livelihoods, education, and social stability," he said.

He also highlighted the role of Citrus Research International (CRI) in providing evidence-based research in plant pathology, entomology, and pre- and post-harvest management, helping the country maintain its position as a global leader in citrus science. Ntshabele noted that citrus growers are not only exporters of fruit but also of knowledge, sustainability, and shared prosperity.

Agbiz fruit desk manager Wolfe Braude presented an overview of South Africa's fruit export landscape. He noted that 36 per cent of exports go to the European Union, 17 per cent to Asia, 15 per cent to the Middle East, 13 per cent to the United Kingdom, 7 per cent to the United States, and 5 per cent to Africa. He

added that agricultural exports are nearly double the value of iron ore, almost three times higher than chromium ore, 2.7 times higher than iron and steel exports, and 1.7 times greater than machinery exports.

A panel discussion on agricultural remedies addressed the regulation and responsible use of these products, maximum residue limits, and challenges facing smallholder farmers. The panel noted that disinvestment by global chemical companies could limit access to research and force reliance on outdated products. South Africa's diverse climates and pest pressures require tailored pest management approaches, combining biological, cultural, and chemical methods. Recent amendments to Act 36 of 1947 prioritise low-risk remedies and align national regulations with international standards, supporting integrated pest management systems that reduce chemical use while maintaining effective control.

Source: Food For Mzansi (<https://www.foodformzansi.co.za/citrus-industry-eyes-growth-through-new-market-access/>)

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