

South African citrus exports surge 22 per cent to record 203.4mn cartons driven by processing demand

By [Fred Meintjes](#) | 10 November 2025

Record-breaking season sees 22 per cent increase on 2024 figures, boosted by processing demand for juicing and an early end to Northern Hemisphere supply



Exceptional demand in overseas markets for processing-grade juicing oranges and juicing lemons contributed to the record-breaking performance for South African citrus this year.

The Citrus Growers' Association of Southern Africa (CGA) said an early end to Northern Hemisphere supply, which resulted in strong demand and extended the supply window, also contributed substantially.

“Improved logistics efficiency, especially port efficiency, was achieved by Transnet, largely through investments in new equipment and the introduction of employee incentives linked to productivity,” said Dr Boitshoko Ntshabele, chief executive of the CGA.

“There was a high level of effective co-operation by all logistics players, including shipping lines, resulting in a productive logistics eco-system.”

While celebrating the success, the CGA said much work needs to be done before next season.

“We remain very worried about the impact of the 30 per cent US tariff on the coming 2026 season,” Ntshabele continued.

“That is why a mutually beneficial trade deal between the United States and South Africa must be finalised urgently.”

He also noted that a tariff exemption for citrus, or all seasonal fresh produce, made sense, as citrus sustains off-season consumption in the US and avoids unnecessary inflation.

“As a relevant example, the United States already exempts Brazilian orange juice from tariffs,” said Ntshabele.

Gerrit van der Merwe, chairperson of the CGA, said it was “imperative” that the South African government actively pursues improved market access in China, India, Japan, South Korea, the European Union, and the US.

“These markets represent real growth opportunities for South African citrus, which is globally recognised for its quality and taste,” he outlined.

A combination of favourable weather conditions in the growing regions and many young trees coming into fruit also contributed to the season being so successful.

In the 2025 export season Southern African citrus growers packed 203.4mn 15kg cartons for delivery to global markets.

This represented a significant 19 per cent increase from the original estimate in April, which was 171.2mn cartons, and a 22 per cent increase on the packed for export figures of 2024.

In the grapefruit category, South Africa exported 15.3mn cartons, which matched the industry forecast.

However, mandarins were the star performers, with 53.5mn cartons representing a notable 28 per cent increase on the previous season, and 19 per cent up on the original estimate in April.

Some 41.3mn cartons of lemons were packed, 26 per cent more than the original estimate, and a 19 per cent rise on the packed figures of 2024.

Navel oranges packed for export showed a 25 per cent increase from 2024. This year's 31.5mn cartons marked a 21 per cent increase on the original estimate.

A total of 61.8mn cartons of Valencia oranges were packed this year. This was a notable increase on the 52mn estimated in April, and last year's 48.7mn cartons.

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