South African oranges win US tariff exemption ahead of 2026 season

The Citrus Growers' Association of Southern Africa (CGA) has welcomed the US government's new tariff exemption on oranges, a move that safeguards South Africa's competitiveness in the American market ahead of the 2026 season, which begins arour April.

Source: Leonardo de Assis via Unsplash

South Africa exported 4.3 million 15kg cartons of oranges to the US during the 2025 season. Whil 30% tariff on South African imports came into effect only in August 2025—toward the end of the season—growers were able to fast-track shipments, limiting its impact.

Dr Boitshoko Ntshabele, CEO of CGA, said: "South Africa has been a partner to the US in citrus su for many years. In their summer, when their own growers are out of season, we supply them with quality citrus. This keeps consumers in the category, ensuring stability and access to affordable imported fruit."

Gerrit van der Merwe, Chairperson of CGA and a citrus grower in Citrusdal, added: "Supply steadi is not a luxury; it is a vital hedge against volatility for the American citrus industry and an example

how global trade benefits everyday American consumers. Citrus, as a fresh, healthy product, is als
uniquely valuable. It helps keep Americans healthy."

Van der Merwe also highlighted the local impact of the exemption: "This announcement takes sor
pressure off our community. There will be some big smiles on the farm come Monday morning. W
have been deeply concerned about the future of our valley for many months.

Mandarins still face tariffs

However, mandarins remain subject to tariffs. Dr Ntshabele noted: "As is understood, mandarin (s
citrus) varieties are, however, not exempt from tariffs. Our mandarins are popular in the US.

"The US should consider extending the current exemption to include mandarins and other citrus varieties, because they share similar market dynamics and supply chain vulnerabilities. Applying t
to mandarins risks creating price spikes, supply shortages, and inflationary pressures."

Since 2017, South African citrus exports to the US have nearly doubled, reflecting strong market demand. Dr Ntshabele concluded: "We hope the trade negotiations currently taking place betwee
South Africa and the US will take the immense value of all South African citrus varieties to the American consumer into account."

The exemption is expected to bolster exports, support local employment, and maintain South Afri
position as a reliable citrus supplier to the US market.

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