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South Africa's orange growers elated over US tariff exemption, but lament the exclusion of mandarins

In a press release, the Citrus Growers' Association of Southern Africa (CGA) **welcomed the new US tariff exemptions**, which include oranges as a citrus variety.

In the past season, South Africa shipped **4.3 million 15-kilo cartons of oranges to the United States**, and even if the 2025 season is already over, the new tariff exemption is great news for the next one starting in April 2026, says the organization.

The tariff exemption **once again makes South African oranges competitive** in the US market, which holds opportunities for increased exports and local job creation, as the country's citrus exports to the US have almost doubled since 2017.

The 30 percent US tariffs had a limited impact on South African citrus exports, as they only came into effect in August 2025, towards the end of the local season. The timing allowed growers to bypass tariffs by increasing and fast-tracking shipments to the US before the deadline.

The market-wide benefits of tariff exemptions

"South Africa has been a partner to the US in citrus supply for many years," said Boitshoko Ntshabele,
CEO of the CGA. "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 the CGA and a citrus grower in Citrusdal in the Western Cape, explained that supply stability is not a luxury, but a vital hedge against volatility for the American citrus industry, and **an example of how global trade benefits everyday American consumers**.

"Citrus as a fresh, healthy product is also uniquely valuable. It helps keep Americans healthy," he said.

The executive noted that **the tariff exemption announcement takes pressure off the citrus community**, which has been deeply concerned about the valley's future for many months.

"There will be some big smiles on the farm," he said.

Mandarins, the forgotten category

Even though the exemption on citrus benefits South African oranges, **the provision does not extend to mandarins**. This is unfortunate, Ntshabele noted, as the fruit is highly 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," he said.

Applying tariffs to mandarins **risks creating price spikes, supply shortages, and inflationary pressures**, he warned.

"We hope the trade negotiations currently taking place between South Africa and the US will take the immense value of all South African citrus varieties to the American consumer into account," Ntshabele concluded.

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