

South Africa 

SA's citrus season delivers record growth

Export volumes break 200m cartons, with mandarins and lemons leading the surge.

By Terri-Ann Brouwers · 14 Oct 2025 ⌚ 04:06

KAL GROUP R43.50 3.57%
10/20/2025, 11:18 AM

RFG R20.55 0.98%
10/20/2025, 11:21 AM

TIGBRANDS R341.58 0.08%
10/20/2025, 11:22 AM



Investments in cargo-handling equipment, including a R3.4bn upgrade and a further R4bn rollout this year, helped streamline operations. Image: Shutterstock

Despite uncertainty surrounding US President Donald Trump's tariffs, South Africa's 2025 citrus season has closed on a strong note, marked by a bumper crop and vastly improved logistics performance across the country's major export terminals.

Transnet Port Terminals (TPT) reported a 19% year-on-year increase in citrus volumes handled by the end of September, underscoring the sector's resilience and operational improvements.

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The Durban Multipurpose Terminal led the gains with a 131.6% increase in throughput, while the Ngqura Container Terminal in the Eastern Cape grew by 35%. Both the Cape Town and Durban Container Terminals also posted double-digit growth of 27.4% and 28.8%, respectively.

"This year has been a remarkable achievement – and this is attributed to a bumper crop season, much improved terminal operational performance, and strong communication, teamwork, and collaboration with customers and stakeholders," says Michelle van Buren Schele, general manager for commercial and planning at TPT.

The company credited its R3.4 billion investment in new cargo-handling equipment, including straddle carriers, haulers, reach stackers, and rubber-tired gantry cranes, for helping to streamline operations during the high-demand citrus season.

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[Transnet opens bidding for Durban multi-purpose terminal concession](#)

[Citrus industry gathered and assessed its future at decisive moment](#)

[Durban to get lion's share of R3.4bn Transnet port equipment overhaul](#)

A further R4 billion investment is being rolled out this financial year across five terminals to sustain efficiency gains.

Former Citrus Growers' Association (CGA) CEO Justin Chadwick describes the 2025 season as one of South Africa's strongest on record.

"Good early markets and excellent-quality export fruit meant that exports made a mockery of industry estimates prepared in March this year," he tells Moneyweb.

According to Chadwick, mandarins and lemons led the surge, with mandarin exports growing by nearly 30% to more than 50 million cartons, and lemons by 19%, surpassing 40 million cartons for the first time. Valencia and navel orange exports also expanded by 26%, helping total exports to exceed 200 million cartons, a 24% increase on 2024.

Read: [Tariff-hit SA targets Asian buyers for farm produce](#)

While final revenue data is still being tallied, Chadwick says early indications suggest that market prices "held up despite the big volumes", reinforcing the sustainability of the industry's growth trajectory.

Platform for expansion

Chadwick credits the CGA and the Department of Agriculture for maintaining “negligible cases of non-compliance” in meeting international plant health standards, despite the surge in export volumes.

“This year’s export season shows what South Africa is capable of doing,” he said.

“With more work on market access and continued improvements in logistics, the 260 million carton goal is looking to be achievable.”

The CGA’s ongoing Vision 260 strategy, aimed at reaching 260 million export cartons by 2032, includes key projects to enhance road and rail efficiency, expand cold storage, improve port operations, and secure sustainable shipping options.

South Africa remains the world’s second-largest citrus producer after Spain, exporting to over 100 countries.

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