

IMPORTS AND EXPORTS

South African citrus exports to Russia on strong growth curve

1 Sep 2025



Source: Freepik



Easier phytosanitary protocols about citrus black spot could benefit local orange exports to Russia, whose Port of St Petersburg has steadily accepted more fruit from South Africa over the past 15 years.

Export data also shows that as of September 1, the first day of week 34 of the year, 5.1 million cartons of citrus have been exported to Russia compared to the 2.6 million cartons last year, which happened to be a very good year for South African citrus heading to Russia.

The year-on-year increase is 96.15%, boding very well for the remaining export-season months of September and October, ordinarily the two peak fruit export months.

Last year, \$149.83 million in citrus was exported to Russia, and 2025's end-of-season figure is expected to be much higher.

Data from Trading Economics shows that, except for 2016 and 2019, citrus exports to Russia have steadily grown.

In 2013, \$101m was exported, tapering off to \$94.3m and \$91.5m until 2016's low of \$73m.

Recovery in 2017 and 2018 was strong, recorded at \$105m and \$113m, followed by the supply-chain dip as the world headed into Covid.

The subsequent growth since 2020 has been nothing short of market-reaffirming, trending ever higher in figures over the past five years: \$126m, \$129m, \$138m, \$146m, and last year's highest-ever export figure for citrus to Russia – \$149.83m.

Stephen Paulsen, commercial manager at Pomona Fruit, told *Sake 24* that the fresh produce distributor had been exporting to Russia for 15 years.

He said apart from the language barrier, which could be difficult for new entrants into the Russian market, easier phytosanitary measures were a good export variable.

Depending on what happens in the US regarding tariffs on South African fruit, Russia could be an alternative market worth considering.

