

South African citrus exports to Russia nearly double

Easier phytosanitary protocols around citrus black spot could support South African orange exports to Russia, where the Port of St Petersburg has been a consistent entry point for fruit over the past 15 years.

Export data shows that as of September 1, the first day of week 34, 5.1 million cartons of citrus had been shipped to Russia compared to 2.6 million cartons during the same period last year, which was already considered a strong year for South African citrus exports to the country. The year-on-year increase of 96.15% points to a higher overall volume for the remainder of the season in September and October, which are usually the peak months for fruit exports.

Last year, South Africa exported citrus worth US\$149.83 million to Russia. The end-of-season value for 2025 is expected to be much higher. According to Trading Economics, exports to Russia have generally trended upward, apart from 2016 and 2019. In 2013, South Africa exported citrus worth US\$101 million to Russia, before falling to US\$94.3 million in 2014 and US\$91.5 million in 2015. Exports reached a low of US\$73 million in 2016. Recovery followed in 2017 and 2018 with values of US\$105 million and US\$113 million. The onset of COVID-19 temporarily impacted supply chains, but since 2020, exports have risen each year: US\$126 million in 2020, US\$129 million in 2021, US\$138 million in 2022, US\$146 million in 2023, and a record US\$149.83 million in 2024.

Stephen Paulsen, commercial manager at Pomona Fruit, told Sake 24 that the company has been exporting to Russia for 15 years. "Apart from the language barrier, which could be difficult for new entrants into the Russian market, easier phytosanitary measures were a good export variable," he said.

Industry observers note that, depending on developments in the United States regarding tariffs on South African fruit, Russia may provide an alternative export market.

Source: Freight News (<https://www.freightnews.co.za/article/south-african-citrus-exports-to-russia-on-strong-growth-curve>)

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