

South Africa citrus exports to rise 5% amid 30% U.S. tariff

South Africa's high-value export industries are entering the 2025 season under new trade conditions shaped by the United States' 30 per cent tariff on South African goods. The tariff is influencing export strategies for citrus, berries, nuts, and table grapes, with exporters weighing options such as sharing tariff costs with buyers or seeking alternative markets. These insights are drawn from the newly released AgriTrends report by Absa.

Citrus

Orange and soft citrus exports continue to dominate South Africa's horticultural trade. Navel orange exports are projected to rise by 5 per cent, while Valencia exports may increase by 6 per cent as more fruit is redirected from fresh markets to processing due to softer global juice prices. Easy peelers face heightened competition from Peru and Morocco, though the United States and European Union remain key destinations if trade negotiations progress. Lemon exports are forecast to grow 6 per cent above early expectations, supported by higher yields and supply shortages in Spain and Turkey.

Berries and table grapes

Blueberry production has rebounded after frost-related setbacks, with exports expected to grow 6.7 per cent in 2024/25. Early prices benefited from delayed supply from Peru, though the market may soften later in the season as volumes from Peru and Chile increase. South Africa's geographic position supports exports to India and other emerging markets, but preferential trade agreements for competitors remain a limitation.

Table grapes face competition from expanding production in Peru and China. Tariffs of up to 30 per cent in the U.S. increase reliance on the EU and Asian markets. Exporters are focusing on premium varieties, logistics optimisation, and stronger retailer partnerships to maintain competitiveness.

Macadamias

South Africa retains its position as the largest global producer of macadamias, accounting for nearly half of the nut-in-shell and kernel markets. Weather-related challenges have lowered 2025 output expectations. Demand from China and the

U.S. remains strong, helping to support prices. U.S. tariffs may result in processors passing additional costs on to buyers or diverting volumes to other destinations.

Outlook

Export sectors across citrus, berries, table grapes, and macadamias are focusing on adaptability and diversification. Efficiency improvements in port operations, yield optimisation, and engagement with alternative markets are seen as key responses to tariff and competition pressures.

Source: Food for Mzansi (<https://www.foodformzansi.co.za/high-value-exports-navigate-trade-shocks-agritrends-spring-2025/>)

Frontpage photo: © Максим Плотников | Dreamstime

Publication date: Thu 11 Sep 2025

-
-

