

IMPORTS AND EXPORTS

Citrus industry already counting the cost of Trump tariffs

15 Sep 2025



Citrusdal's fruit is predominantly destined for the US market. Source: Agoa

2 Comments

Importers of South African citrus in the United States are already scaling back volumes because of the 30% tariff increases imposed on local fruit.

This is despite initial indications that large American distributors would absorb the price-point impact of more expensive citrus, Citrus Growers Association chair Gerrit van der Merwe has told *Netwerk 24*.

Speaking ahead of a meeting of agriculture ministers next week in preparation for the G20 Summit in Sandton in November, Van der Merwe, who serves as the managing director of ALG Estates in Citrusdal, said he estimated the volume impact of "Trump tariffs" to be about a third of last year's amount of fruit shipped to the States.

In 2024, about a million cartons were exported to the US, still under duty-free protection guaranteed by the African Growth and Opportunity Act.

But the Trump Administration's protectionist trade policies have taken a sledgehammer to what is a sensitive cold-chain market, driving citrus

exports down to as little as 600 000 cartons of Midnight cultivar citrus.

The volume decrease excluded mandarins, Van der Merwe told journalist Stefani Terblanche, which are cheaper for the US to import from Chile and Peru because not only are they closer to North America, but they have only 10% tariffs on exports to the US.

So, what's the worst-case scenario for farming communities such as Citrusdal, which is almost wholly dependent on the country-seasonal export advantage to the US market?

According to Van der Merwe, orchards planted specifically for the American consumers may have to be chopped down.

It includes ALG's orchards on the banks of the Olifants River and the seasonal employment they provide for about 500 workers.

He said although alternative markets were there, it took time to develop them, mainly because of complying with phytosanitary protocols

