



SA export volume to South Korea

AN IMPORTANT REBOUND

The volume of citrus presented for South Korea already exceeds the overall volume of citrus presented in 2023. By Mitchell Brooke



The Citrus Growers' Association of Southern Africa (CGA) administers the cost of the South Korean programme on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD). This encompasses administering the cost of the inspectors, for their travel to SA and accommodation expenses, as well as administering the cost of DALRRD pre-clearance sample inspections. These costs are budgeted for at the start of each season and recuperated from exporters against a season estimate provided by them.

Traditionally, between 800 000 and 1 million cartons are inspected and exported annually. It is anticipated that the export volume to South Korea should grow in accordance with the volume growth projections aligned with Vision 260. However, the volume has been in a steady state of decline for the past two seasons. This was an extremely concerning development since South Korea remains an important market for South African citrus, particularly grapefruit.

Since much of the cost of the South Korean programme is fixed, the lower volume being inspected and exported resulted in a higher cost per carton for the programme overall. In 2023, a total of 365 170 cartons was presented for pre-clearance inspection – a significant decrease.

Thus far, however, a rebound in the volume of citrus being exported to South Korea in 2024, has been very encouraging. **Table 1** highlights a comparison between the inspected and exported volumes up to week 22 in 2024 compared to 2023. The volume of citrus presented for South Korea

has already surpassed the overall volume of citrus presented in 2023. The number of containers that have been shipped so far in 2024, exceeds the number of containers shipped in 2023 by the end of week 22, by more than double (>100%).

Importantly, the rejection rate of 11% in 2024 is largely attributed to the detection of actionable species of mealybug. Consignments that are detected for mealybug have samples sent to the DALRRD laboratory for testing, to identify and determine the specific species. After laboratory testing, it can take up to a

Table 1: Update of citrus volume inspected and exported in 2024 vs. 2023

	Cartons presented	Cartons passed	Cartons rejected	% Passed for South Korea	No. of containers exported
2023 total	365 170	331 611	33 520	91%	231
2023 to week 22	182 403	163 563	18 840	90%	98
2024 to week 22	374 170	334250	39 920	89%	210
2024 vs. 2023	191 767	170 687	21 080		112

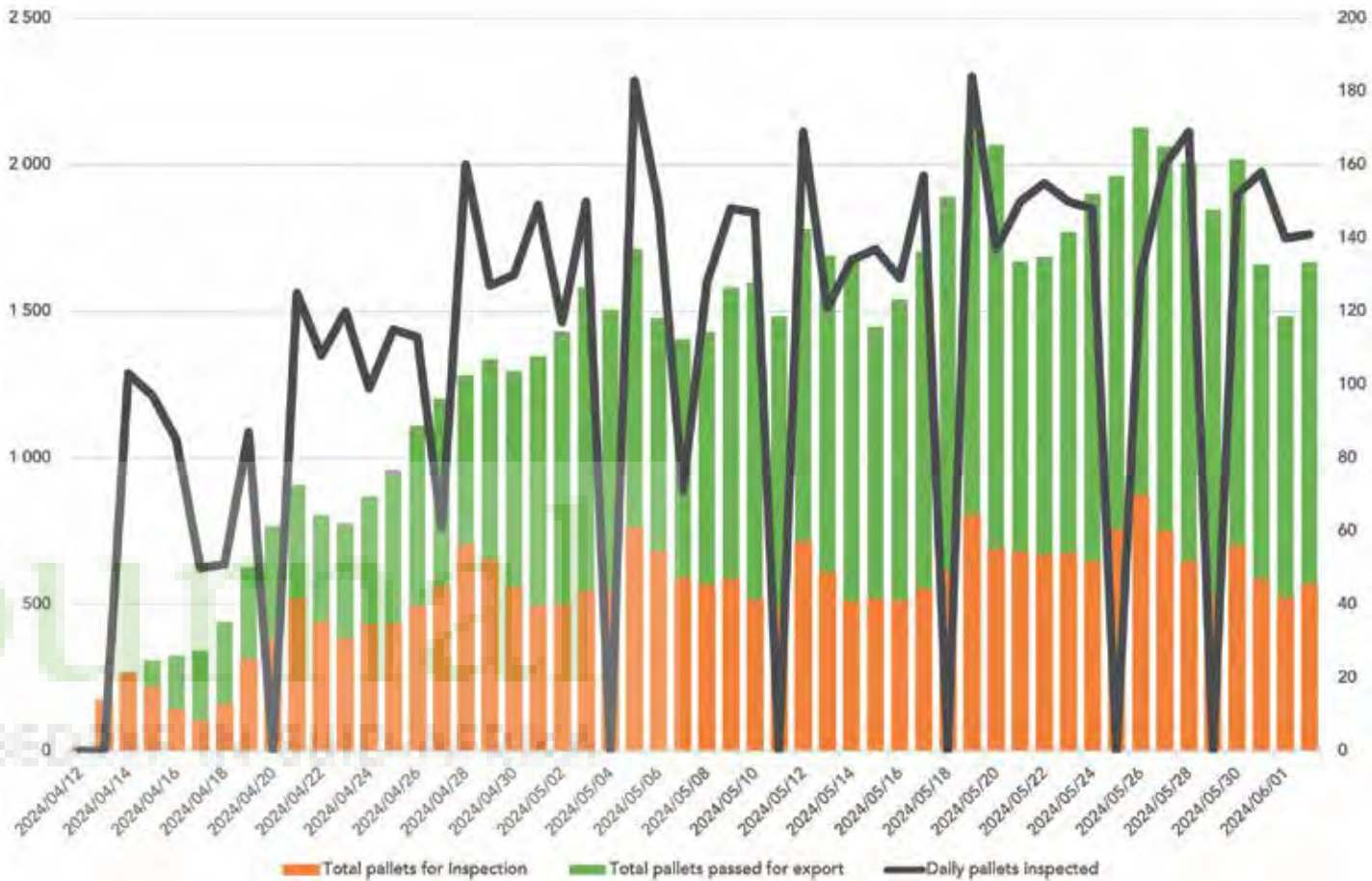


Chart 1: 2024 volume of daily stock and inspection for South Korea

week for the results to determine if the consignment is to be passed or rejected. Therefore, this process compromises the efficient export of consignments within an acceptable timeframe.

Chart 1 reflects the daily pallets awaiting inspection, the number of pallets inspected, and the number of pallets passed for export to South Korea. Notably, the average daily number of pallets inspected is a mere 121, and the average daily number of pallets waiting to be inspected by DALRRD and the South Korean inspector is 594. Therefore, consignments due for inspection are subject to an average waiting period of five days at the cold store. Thus, the average dwell time for consignments to be exported to South Korea from packhouse to packing containers at the cold store can exceed 14 days.

To decrease this timeframe, the average daily inspection rate must increase by double or triple the current 121 pallets per day. Then

If South Korean officials agreed to independent inspections by DALRRD, it would significantly decrease the cost of the programme.

container lots can be exported from the farm or packhouse in about 10 days.

If South Korean officials agreed to independent inspections by DALRRD, it would significantly decrease the cost of the programme. Presumably, this hinges on them gaining confidence in the effectiveness of mealybug control in SA. In this vein, there is a big incentive for citrus farmers to intensify measures to control mealybug, thus limiting exposure in accordance with the protocol. The cost of exporting citrus to South Korea would then be greatly reduced and the logistics would be more streamlined, for a more sustainable programme. 🍊

