Dr Boitshoko Ntshabele
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Week 18/26

FROM THE DESK OF THE CEO

"A bird doesn't sing because it has an answer, it sings because it has a song." (Maya Angelou)

A BOOST TO CITRUS EXPORTS TO CHINA

In early February 2026 we read in the news of the signing of the Framework Agreement on Economic Partnership Shared Prosperity (CAEPA) between China and African States, which also foresaw the concept of a possible early harvest-implementation of some aspects of the agreement while further negotiations ensued. By all accounts the signing reflected more a statement of intent while all parties work toward concluding a trade agreement.

In the same month the Chinese President made an announcement on the margins of the 39th African Union Summit that China will implement and extend a unilateral zero-tariff treatment to 53 African countries having diplomatic relations with China, starting from May 1, 2026. In a parallel process, the South African Department of Trade, Industry and Competition and their Chinese counterparts are negotiating and working toward the conclusion of a trade agreement.

On the 10th of April 2026, South African Minister of Agriculture signed, together with the Chinese Ambassador, an amendment to the cold treatment for the export of citrus to China. The amendment came into effect on the 23rd of April 2026.

These all represent significant progress that, given all the current economic uncertainty and disruption caused by the conflict in the Middle East, we need to pause and celebrate.

The 1st of May is upon us as I write this newsletter, and processes are unfolding between the Chinese and the South African governments as well as their related agencies to make this historic moment a reality. On the 28th of April 2026, General Administration of Customs of China circulated a notice which outlines the mechanism for implementing the zero-tariff offer. Based on this notice, the South African Revenue Service will be able to adjust its systems to align with the required Certificate of Origin processes.

This tariff reduction is, of course, a unilateral offer by China rather than a formal trade agreement. As has been consistently emphasised, South Africa should continue to prioritise the conclusion of a rules-based trade agreement, drawing on lessons learned from the US's African Growth and Opportunity Act. We were all on tenterhooks until the US administration extended AGOA for a one-year period ending December 2026.

While we are deeply grateful for the Chinese government's gesture and zero-tariff offer within the proposed two year interim period, it is important to point out that the South African government shouldn't use the entire two years to conclude a bilateral trade agreement with China, but should rather work to expeditiously have an agreement in place before the offer expires. We of course have a firm appreciation of the complexities involved in these processes!

INTERESTING FACTS

In the last thirty years citrus production worldwide has continued to steadily increase and is now reaching more than 130 million tonnes, representing a growth of around 125%.

PACKED AND SHIPPED VOLUMES

End of week 17 million 15 kg cartons	*Packed*	*Packed*	*Packed*	*Shipped*	*Shipped*	*Original Estimate*	*Latest Prediction*	*Final Packed*	*Vision 260*
SOURCE: PPECB/AGRIHUB	2024	2025	**2026**	2025	**2026**	2026	**2026**	2025	**2026**
Grapefruit	4.3 m	4.2 m	4.1 m	2.5 m	2 m	17.8 m	17.8 m	15.3 m	15.5 m
Lemons	7.3 m	7.9 m	11.5 m	7.2 m	6.8 m	45.9 m	45.9 m	41.6 m	43.4 m
Mandarins	3.2 m	2.2 m	3.6 m	1.4 m	1.6 m	52.7 m	52.7 m	53.5 m	50 m
Navels	0.2 m	0.1 m	0.2 m	-	-	30 m	30 m	31.6 m	32.3 m
Valencia	-	-	-	-	-	63 m	63 m	62 m	67.8 m
Total	**15 m**	**14.4 m**	**19.4 m**	**11.1 m**	**10.4 m**	**209.4 m**	**209.4 m**	**204 m**	**209 m**