

“Wit is the sudden marriage of ideas which, before their union, were not perceived to have any relation.”
– Mark Twain

STRONGER PARTNERSHIPS TO TAKE AGRICULTURE FORWARD

The citrus industry is set to have a record year with the estimate for exported 15kg cartons revised to 203 million, having opened the season at an expected 171 million – by all account an exceptional year. All partners have cooperated to make this a success, and most importantly the logistics flow and the ports also held up well overall.

This comes at a time during which policy discussions, government restructuring, trade issues, and future vision have been top of mind. We last week reported on the colloquium that the Department of Agriculture (DoA) held in August 2025, articulating the evolution of pesticides policy and highlighted that wherever policy ultimately lands, it must not negatively impact the access to tools for the agriculture industry. The Department of Agriculture formally separated from the Department of Land Reform and Rural Development as of April this year, following the reorganisation of government announced last year. The bulk of the current year was overshadowed by the change in US policy, with the imposition of reciprocal tariffs, with the other dominant issue South Africa's G20 presidency, which ends next month. The citrus industry's Vision 260 was conceptualised with the goal of exporting 260 million 15kg cartons by 2032, with an estimated 100 000 jobs created. Agriculture exports have been reported higher than expected, especially given the general headwinds and geopolitical tension.

With all this as background, one feels that there is an opportunity for a refocus and reorientation for policy to support the growth potential within agriculture. Government has since the advent of the US tariff issue spoken of diversification of markets but there has as yet, been no substantial clarity in terms of a 'how' we are to achieve this as a sector. The additional volume imminently coming from our sector needs new and varied markets.

The contribution of agriculture to the economy continues to beg for a response from government to channel the positive momentum into a direction where all stakeholders are aligned, so that opportunities are created especially for Private Public Partnerships (PPP) as envisaged in the Agriculture and Agro-processing Master Plan (AAMP).

The positive sentiment from the season's performance seems to be crowding out the negatives experienced, creating an air of optimism for the future. Optimism in agriculture often translates into further investment, so the economists tell us! The AAMP is premised on a PPP approach, and with a bit of optimism in the air, the time to strike is now in terms of implementation.

This past week a report by the Centre for Development and Enterprise rightly highlighted what it called South Africa's "unemployment catastrophe". Turning the hope offered by agriculture into jobs will only be possible if government and the private sector work together.

One of the long-standing criticisms of South Africa is that as a country we have fantastic plans, but we are often poor at executing them. Is it not time for the DoA to put its best foot forward to drive the initiatives envisaged in the AAMP? The timing is certainly in favour especially with regards to exports as a focus to drive inclusive growth.

PACKED AND SHIPPED VOLUMES

End of Week 40 million 15 kg Cartons	Packed	Packed	Packed	Shipped	Shipped	Original Estimate	Latest Prediction	Final Packed	Vision 260
SOURCE: PPECB/AGRIHUB	2023	2024	2025	2024	2025	2025	2025	2024	2025
Grapefruit	14.2 m	14.4 m	15.3 m	14.1 m	15.0* m	15.3 m	15.3 m	14.4 m	16.8 m
Lemons	36.8 m	34.7 m	41.3 m	34.5 m	40.5 m	32.9 m	41.3 m	34.7 m	41.5 m
Mandarins	40.0 m	41.6 m	53.4 m	41.0 m	51.5 m	44.9 m	53.8 m	41.6 m	43.9 m
Navels	26.1 m	25.1 m	31.5 m	24.5 m	30.7 m	26.1 m	31.6 m	25.1 m	21.7 m
Valencia	53.1 m	48.5 m	60.7 m	45.6 m	56.6 m	52.0 m	61.6 m	48.8 m	58.0 m
Total	170.2 m	164.3 m	202.2 m	159.7 m	194.3 m	171.2 m	203.6 m	164.6 m	181.9 m

*Latest figure unavailable due to technical issues.