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Mandarin crop to rise in South Africa



CGA confirms interim forecast but says final figure will only be available later

South Africa's mandarin citrus sector is expected to continue growing this year, but the final estimate will only be available later when all information has been collected.

"Now, the preliminary forecast is in the region of 34m cartons (15kg) which will be exported this year," the CGA stated. "This indicates a 3.7m carton increase from the final packed and shipped figures for mandarin varieties compared to last year's export figure."

The Mandarin Focus Group (MFG) said it would soon finalise the estimate, but warned that it could still change due to external circumstances which might affect the final packed and shipped figures towards the end of the year.

In this regard the MFG said that water shortages in some regions and hail in others could affect the crop this year.

The level of the Patensie dam in the Eastern Cape poses a considerable threat to growers in that region, currently at only 13 per cent of capacity.

"Citrus growers in Hoedspruit and Nelspruit have also experienced hail which may affect the quality of fruit destined for export," the MFG said.

On the other hand, the crop forecast for growers in the Hoedspruit region in the north of the country remained high, as young and new orchards recently came into production. The same applies for several citrus growers in the Western Cape.

MFG said that overall, the mandarin crop outlook remained positive and the quality of fruit across all categories was high.

While the forecast for the rest of the South African citrus categories were issued previously, mandarin growers preferred to wait longer to finalise their estimate.

Along with lemons, mandarins is presently the major growing citrus sector in the country. Last year 30.8m cartons were packed compared to 23.6m cartons packed the year before.

The CGA said previously that the estimates for lemons, grapefruit, navels and Valencia types indicated a continuation of steady growth this year.

"These estimates reveal that the industry will continue to see steady growth across most citrus varieties, with an estimated 4 per cent growth in exports across these categories."

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