

# Increases in export volumes estimated for South Africa's 2024 citrus season

South Africa's 2024 citrus export season will begin in earnest this month. The variety focus groups of the Citrus Growers' Association of Southern Africa (CGA) presented their predicted export volumes for the upcoming season at the Citrus Marketing Forum held last week.



"Overall, an increase in export volume is expected. South African citrus growers, produce more citrus under challenging circumstances, such as steep increases in input costs, load shedding and deteriorating public infrastructure. This increase is also a result of younger trees coming into production across a number of regions," notes the CGA.

The current prediction is that 37.9 million (15 kg) cartons of Lemons will be exported to key markets, which is an increase of 7% over last year.

Predictions show a 4% increase in export volume for Navel oranges, with 25.6 million (15 kg) cartons expected to be packed. After two years of suppressed Valencia orange exports, production is likely to improve in 2024 and return to the long-term trajectory. An increase on 2023 export volumes of 12% to 58 million (15 kg) cartons is projected. However, the Orange Focus Group highlighted that due to substantially higher returns expected for fruit being supplied to local processors, exports could be reduced by up to 5%. This has not been factored into the forecast of 58 million cartons.

Grapefruit exports are also predicted to increase back up to the long-term average, 14% growth with 16.7 million (15 kg) cartons. The increased export volume can partly be ascribed to processing fruit (PP class) once again being exported to China, which was not the case last year.

The Satsuma season is likely to close around the 1.7 million mark (up 16%), Clementines and Novas are expected to reach 5.4 million (up 8%) and 4.5 million (up 8%), respectively. A full estimate for the late mandarin crop will be available later in the season.

"The quality of the fruit for 2024 looks to be excellent and timing for harvesting is expected to be typical. Recent dry conditions in the Northern growing regions could mean that fruit sizes might be somewhat smaller than in 2023, but late rains could change this. In the 2023 growers packed 165.1 million (15 kg) cartons for delivery to global markets. The increase of approximately 800 000 cartons was substantially below the long-term anticipated growth curve."

"The EU's discriminatory and unscientific phytosanitary regulations regarding Citrus Black Spot (CBS) and False Codling Moth (FCM) is a serious threat that could lead to South Africa being denied access to the European market. The CGA hopes the South African government will soon call for the establishment of an independent World Trade Organisation (WTO) panel that can adjudicate on the FCM matter. On CBS it is essential that the government calls for a WTO consultation process."

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