

Africa is enjoying increased fruit exports to Europe and Asia

Africa is enjoying increased fruit exports to the EU, the United Kingdom and Asia, helping to fill a growing supply gap occasioned by low harvests in those markets. According to the EU Citrus Semi-Annual Report, the production of citrus fruits in Europe is expected to decrease by 10 per cent in the 2022-23 season, with Spain experiencing the largest decline. This means that African producers can step in to fill the gap.

The combined impact of insufficient spring rains, a warmer summer and drought experienced up to May 2023, the report said, have compromised the EU's citrus production, particularly oranges and lemons. Conversely, African countries are recording higher fruit harvests despite heavy rainfall in some countries like South Africa and a lack of sufficient water in Morocco, signalling an expansion of the area under commercial fruit production on the continent.

South African oranges are now playing a crucial role in filling a supply gap in Europe during a period when the Spanish citrus harvest has ended, and there is limited other supply available. South Africa accounted for 7 per cent of all orange supplies into the European market in 2022, with Egypt, Morocco, Zimbabwe, Argentina and Uruguay sharing a further 6 per cent.

Forecasts point to a boom in lemon production from South Africa, Zimbabwe and Eswatini in 2023, with a projected volume of 37.3 million (15kg) cartons in 2023. Zimbabwean exporters are gearing up to enter Asian markets after the General Administration of Customs of China on June 1 authorised six Zimbabwean orchards and 11 packing houses to start exporting citrus.

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