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South African citrus growers gearing up for significant export season to the U.S.

South African citrus growers from the Western and Northern Capes are gearing up for a significant export season to the United States, with expectations to ship around 60,000 tons of citrus through Cape Town to Philadelphia. This marks a 9% increase over the 2018 record of 55,000 tons, according to the Citrus Growers Association. The association highlights that the 230 growers exporting to the US support approximately 30,000 jobs in rural areas, with an anticipated increase in employment due to the rise in exports.

These exports are coordinated under Summer Citrus, a collective established in 1999 to streamline logistics, marketing, and sales to enhance market access during the US summer. Over the past decade, this initiative has boosted citrus exports to the US by 60%. The current growth is attributed to higher mandarin production and demand in the US, alongside increased shipments of oranges, particularly summer navels, spurred by heightened consumer demand for vitamin C amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

Despite logistical challenges posed by the pandemic and lockdown measures, Summer Citrus and its partners have quickly adapted, ensuring the continued movement of planned volumes. Looking ahead, the US remains a focal market for expansion, with the South African citrus industry aiming to increase output by 500,000 tons in the next three to five years. Other markets targeted for growth include China, India, the Philippines, Japan, Vietnam, and the EU, as stated by Justin Chadwick, CEO of the Citrus Growers' Association.

Source: citizen.co.za

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