

Egypt overtakes South Africa as continent's top orange exporter

Weather woes and imposition of cold treatment by the European Commission severely impacted South African citrus exports in the past year. This unfavorable situation for South African exporters cost them the throne as top African exporter, according to an analysis shared by [Fedecitrus](#).



A Dec. 19 report by the USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) projects South African orange production to drop in 2024 by 1%. Trade is expected to be up 2%, with poor fruit quality affecting export numbers.

In contrast, for marketing year 2023-24, the FAS office in Cairo forecasts orange production to be up by 3%. Additionally, the report points to a 25% surge in Egypt's fresh orange exports to [2.0 million metric tons](#). Meanwhile, FAS projected South Africa to export 1.37 million metric tons.

As of 2021-22, both countries had about 1.3 million MT in fresh orange exports, according to FAS data.

Related articles: [Hortgro: Cape Town Port delays hindered South Africa stone fruit campaign](#)

Higher Egyptian yields were attributed to favorable environmental conditions, new market openings for oranges, and a successful traceability system in registering and monitoring farm production.

Increasing demand for Egyptian oranges in international markets and joint government and private sector successful efforts have led growers to cultivate oranges over other fruit types.

Over the last decade, small growers and commercial farms have focused on producing clean fruit to maintain high volumes in high-value export markets.

Orange is the major citrus crop in Egypt, representing 70% of overall citrus cultivated areas. Baladi, Valencia, Navel, and Sweet Orange are the top-grown varieties in Egypt.

The Netherlands, Russia, Saudi Arabia, India, United Arab Emirates, Spain, Bangladesh, Syria, China, and the United Kingdom are likely to remain Egypt's top ten export destinations for fresh oranges.

As for the South African industry, the citrus hub saw reduced crops in 2023 with less than 1% growth year-on-year, according to the Citrus Growers Association of South Africa (CGA).

CGA Manager Justin Chadwick said in a CGA release that the industry has faced multiple challenges in marketing the fruit overseas.

He pointed to the repeated power cuts resulting from the energy crisis of the state-owned power company, Eskom, which affected irrigation and fertilization of the plantations, as well as packing and refrigeration.

Additionally, devastating floods in June affected farms in the Western Cape province, one of the main harvesting areas, and caused economic losses estimated at more than 500 million rand (24.6 million euros).

In addition to these domestic disruptions, Justin Chadwick confirmed that the biggest challenge for the South African export industry "has been the imposition of cold treatment", that the European Commission imposed to prevent the spread of the 'False Moth' to European citrus plantations.

Fresh Fruit Portal.com

