South Africa faces 48.7% drop in orange prices as citrus season peaks

South Africa, Peru, Chile, Argentina, Australia, and Uruguay are currently in their citrus marketing seasons, although products such as lemons, oranges, and easy peelers are at different stages. South Africa is at the peak of its season, while Chile is primarily focused on North American markets and Peru supplies easy peelers and mandarins.

The period is important for South Africa following severe weather-related setbacks in May 2026 that affected citrus-producing regions including the Western Cape and Eastern Cape, as well as difficulties supplying the Middle East. Favourable weather during the previous production season also increased fruit supplies, putting pressure on farmers' profit margins. Local fruit prices were 8.5% lower in June 2026.

Global orange prices are also declining. Prices rose from around US$0.54 per kilogram in 1996 to a peak of US$2.7 in December 2024. Latest World Bank data for June and July 2026 show prices falling to levels last seen in March 2022, linked to lower consumption demand. Global orange consumption is forecast to decline by an additional 3% as ten years of high retail prices weigh on demand.

Orange prices fell 10.9% month over month from US$0.92 to US$0.82 per kilogram in June 2026, and 39.7% year over year from US$1.36 to US$0.82. In July, prices fell from US$1.36 per kilogram in July 2025 to US$0.78 per kilogram in July 2026, a 48.7% year-over-year decline.

The trend is relevant for South Africa, which is expected to record another high-volume citrus export season. Oranges generated US$1.0 billion in export revenue in 2025, followed by mandarins at US$808.4 million, lemons at US$533.2 million, and grapefruit at US$141.3 million.

The sector also faces labour concerns linked to tensions over illegal immigration, affecting access to workers in Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal. South Africa is subject to a 12.5% tariff following a Section 301 probe, although oranges are currently exempt.

With uncertainty around orange prices, global supply chains, and the Middle East, the EU, the U.S., Asia, and small island markets will remain important destinations. South Africa leads global citrus exports by volume, while pricing remains a factor in competitiveness against Spain, the U.S., and Australia.

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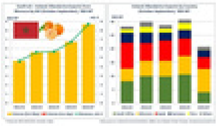
- 

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