South Africa cuts citrus forecast amid seasonal challenges

By Fred Meintjes | 12 August 2026

The CGA has revised its citrus export estimate down to 205.3mn cartons as the industry contends with disrupted Middle East trade routes and adverse weather

Image: CGA

The South African Citrus Growers' Association (CGA) has revised its total export estimate for 2026 downward from 209.4mn cartons to 205.3 cartons, following the most recent meetings of the various variety focus groups.

It has been a very challenging campaign for growers on a number of fronts, the association noted.

The season began in a stop-start manner as the northern regions experienced interruptions due to rain, and later in May there were floods in the Western and Eastern Cape.

"Since February, exports to the Middle East have been impacted by the war in that part of the world," the CGA stated.

"Under normal conditions the region takes 20 per cent of exports. The CGA established a crisis committee that continues to meet with the intention to provide regular updates and information," it continued.

The war has also placed considerable pressure on input and logistics costs, such as diesel and, most notably, shipping rates.

"The potential spread of the conflict to the Red Sea and any disruptions at the Port of Jeddah is a growing concern for shipping routes and for grower options going forward," the CGA warned.

Mandarins have been lowered by 2.7mn cartons, with harvesting for Nova and Leanri completed, and packing that remains is for late mandarin types such as Orri, Nadorcott and Tango.

The orange estimate for Navels is down by 4.6mn cartons from the original estimate in March 2026 with most packing completed.

South African citrus industry laments further escalation of Middle East war

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There is less than 6mn cartons of late Navels to pack.

Valencia packing will reach its peak over the next two to three weeks, and this season has seen marginal adjustments to the estimates.

"There is an overall trend of excellent yields per hectare in the northern regions which has been offset by a lower crop in the Eastern and Western Cape," the CGA said.

Meanwhile, orange juice factories are processing considerable volumes of fruit.

"The expectation is that the season might be somewhat longer than usual," it noted.

Grapefruit volumes have been lowered by 1.7mn cartons since the original forecast, while lemons had a reasonably good run this season and saw a total increase of 5.4mn cartons on the first estimate.

Packing has drawn to a close in most regions, and only the country's largest lemon-producing region, the Eastern Cape, is left and has less than 10 per cent of the crop to go.

The CGA season has reached its peak volumes, and ports, especially Durban, are experiencing pressure due to supply chain constraints.

It said it is in contact with all players to find solutions and resolve the congestion.

Overall, the CGA is reiterating the importance of quality discipline across the value chain.

“There’s no denying this is a very tough season for our growers,” it added. “Yet, the long-term growth of our industry remains within reach.”