

South Africa's citrus industry marks inaugural annual citrus day

Western Cape Minister of Agriculture, Economic Development and Tourism, Dr Ivan Meyer, has welcomed the Citrus Growers Association's (CGA) inaugural Annual Citrus Day, held in Citrusdal on 11 August 2026, as a milestone recognising South Africa's citrus industry.

Addressing industry leaders, growers, exporters, researchers, and stakeholders, Meyer said the event fulfilled a vision he proposed during his Budget Vote Speech earlier this year to establish a dedicated South African Citrus Day.



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"This gathering is about much more than citrus. It is about celebrating the growers, farm workers, researchers, exporters, entrepreneurs and communities whose efforts have made South African citrus a global success story," said Meyer.

The Minister said Citrusdal was a fitting location, given its status as an established citrus-producing region and a symbol of the industry's resilience, innovation, and development.

South Africa's citrus sector remains a major contributor to economic growth, employment, and export earnings. According to CGA statistics highlighted by Meyer, the industry achieved a record export season in 2025, exporting 203.9 million 15-kilogram cartons, equivalent to approximately 3.06 million tons of citrus. The sector remains South Africa's largest agricultural export industry by value and supports an estimated 140,000 jobs at farm level.



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Dr Boitshoko Ntshabele, CEO of the CGA, said the event highlighted the industry's role in rural economies, community support, research, and technology.

Meyer said South Africa could draw inspiration from international examples such as California's Sunkist Citrus Day while creating a uniquely South African tradition.

He also highlighted challenges including rising input costs, water constraints, biosecurity threats, climate variability, and global competition. Reliable ports, rail infrastructure, and freight systems remain important to maintaining international competitiveness.

"Our responsibility is to build on that success by improving logistics, strengthening biosecurity, supporting innovation, expanding market access and ensuring that growth creates opportunities for more South Africans," he said.

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Publication date: Wed 12 Aug 2026



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