

Pest control becomes increasingly important for South African fruit exports

South Africa's record fruit exports are increasing the importance of pest management for maintaining access to international markets. The country exported 203.4 million 15-kilogram cartons of citrus in 2025, equivalent to around 2.9 million tonnes. Export volumes were 22% higher than the previous season.

For fruit exporters, phytosanitary requirements are an important part of market access. Pest detections can result in additional inspections, treatment requirements, shipment delays or, in some cases, rejection of consignments.

The Mediterranean fruit fly (Medfly) is one of the pests posing a risk to fruit production and exports. It affects a range of crops and can damage fruit and reduce yields.

South Africa has been developing the Sterile Insect Technique (SIT) for more than two decades, particularly in the Western Cape. The approach involves releasing sterile male insects that compete with wild males for mates, reducing the pest population over time.

The programme has expanded to cover commercial deciduous fruit and table grape production. According to the International Plant Protection Convention, around 65 million sterile male Medflies were being produced each week by 2023, with releases covering roughly 40,000 hectares during the main season.

In areas covered by the programme, average wild Medfly populations fell by 73%.

SIT forms part of a broader pest-management approach alongside monitoring, orchard sanitation and other crop-protection measures. The source also notes that its effectiveness depends on sustained funding, quality control, management and staff training.

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Source: thebulrushes.com (<https://thebulrushes.com/2026/09/29/why-pest-control-is-becoming-export-infrastructure-for-south-africas-fruit-industry/>)

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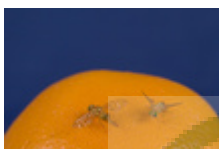
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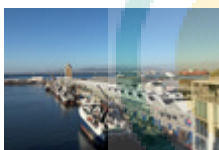
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