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Record citrus volumes – but returns disappoint

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While the record volume of citrus exported from southern Africa in 2018 has been trumpeted in the press, the returns to growers have been less encouraging.

Although a record in total export earnings was achieved, the returns per ton were said to be lower than the previous few years, according to Citrus Growers' Association CEO Justin Chadwick.

“Statistics currently being assembled by John Edmonds, CGA information manager, reflect that the average price achieved from all four citrus sectors was lower than in 2017 – and appreciably so for lemons and soft citrus. On average lemon returns are 50% of the levels achieved in 2016,” he said.

He pointed out, however, that this was the average return achieved per sector across all markets, across all varieties and across all grades of citrus sold. “Some markets and some grades/varieties performed better than others. However, it does indicate a worrying reversal in the trend that started in 2009, and a signal to exporters to pay attention to supplying the market with what they want, and when they want it, in 2019,” he said.

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