



Justin Chadwick - Citrus Growers' Association of Southern Africa

South African citrus industry is hoping for a more positive season

The South African citrus industry is hoping for a more positive season this year after last year was a 'disaster' according to Justin Chadwick CEO of Citrus Growers' Association of Southern Africa.

"Last year the freight rate was double the norm, this accounts for 30-40% of grower's costs so it was a big hit on returns. The EU also changed the regulation on False Codling Moth after we had fruit on the water which made it impossible for growers to comply. It meant that exporters paid an additional R300 million to have fruit cleared at EU borders. The prices at market were ok but certainly not enough to cover all these extra costs. In addition the ports continue to operate below optimum efficiency."



Justin said that these new regulations brought in by the EU have no scientific basis and they are imploring the EU to look at this again as there has not been one interception since the interim measures were introduced in 2022. In order to meet the requirements an investment of R1.4 billion would need to be made – which is not possible as the season starts in a few weeks. The impact could mean that 20% less oranges are exported to the EU in 2023.

"The Spanish should not be threatened by South African citrus, we are not even in the market at the same time as them, South African imports ensure there is citrus on the shelves all year round which is good for everyone."

Citrus production

The first lemons were harvested back in January, rain in the far north meant a dip in packing for a short period but has not affected the season. The volumes will be slightly up on last year as younger orchards come into production.

Grapefruit export will be down on last year as growers get lower returns and are considering keeping processed grade fruit at home.

Oranges: Navels are slightly down, while Valencias will be up. The mandarin estimate will be available later in April – initial estimates reflect a decrease in satsuma types.

Load Shedding

Load shedding has been a disaster for growers, everything from irrigation to packing is affected by it.

“Growers need electricity for irrigation, there is no alternative. They also rely on it for packing and need to have a consistent cold chain, people are buying generators and investing in solar power systems as they can’t afford to not have consistent power supply, however growers have no control of what happens to the fruit when it enters the cold chain and gets delivered to warehouses and ports.”

Export markets

Citrus exports to China are increasing every year, Russia is also a good market for South African citrus but freight there remains very high. India has great potential and there is hope of access to other markets such as Japan and Vietnam.

For more information:

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