

Bad weather forces downward adjustment of orange export estimates

The Citrus Growers' Association (GSA) of Southern Africa's Orange Focus Group recently reviewed the export estimates for the 2024 orange season. They made a further downward adjustment to the projected export figures for Navels and issued the largest projection cut of the season for Valencia oranges, primarily due to extreme weather events in key growing regions.



Source: [123RF](#)

The projected number of 15kg cartons of Navel oranges expected to be exported is now 21 million, continuing the downward trajectory that was started in May when the season-opening estimate of 25.7 million was reduced to 22 million.

This latest review brings the total reduction for the season to a significant 19%. Currently, late Navels are being packed and shipped as the Navel season draws to a close.

For Valencia oranges, key growing regions in Limpopo and Mpumalanga are well underway with their season, while growers in the Eastern and Western Cape will only start to pack their first

Valencia volumes in earnest in the coming weeks.

The latest projected volume of 15kg cartons of Valentias expected to be exported by Southern African growers is now 51,6 million, down from May's forecast of 56 million, and April's season-opening estimate of 58 million. This is an 11% reduction from the first estimate.

Impact of extreme weather

The largest downward adjustments reflected in the latest review come out of Letsitele, Hoedspruit and the Senwes (Marble Hall and Groblersdal) areas, where the season's production trends have already revealed themselves. Marble Hall and Groblersdal were also hard hit by recent frost damage, further reducing production forecasts.

"Inclement weather over the past two weeks has meant further reduction in predicted volumes," said Stiaan Engelbrecht, Chairman of the Orange Focus Group.

"The freezing cold in the Senwes region has meant that the Navel estimate in that region has been reduced by 600,000 cartons and the Valencia volumes by one million cartons.

The Western Cape (Citrusdal) has been impacted by recent flooding and storms, while the Eastern Cape has been impacted by high winds," Engelbrecht continued. Storms and winds cause fruit to drop from trees, while frost damage also impacts production.

Market balance and challenges

"It is now clear that there will not be an oversupply of oranges this season. We are looking at a balanced market," said Jan-Louis Pretorius, Vice chairman of the CGA and a citrus grower in Limpopo.

"These adjusted figures tell the story of a unique season. Firstly, drier and warmer conditions caused fruit sizes to be somewhat smaller. Secondly, a very good local juicing price enticed growers to move more oranges to processing. Thirdly, the bad weather of the past two and a half weeks caused challenges.

"The last time the industry was looking at similar orange figures was during the 2017 season, especially remembered for the Western Cape drought," Pretorius explained.

While the financial damage to infrastructure caused by the floods in Citrusdal has not yet been calculated, export oranges have started moving out of the town in the past few days through a private bridge on a citrus farm after the valley was cut off. A provincial disaster was declared after severe rainfall two weeks ago. The Port of Cape Town is back to efficient operation.

Gerrit van der Merwe, Chairman of the CGA and a grower in Citrusdal, has praised the cooperation and resilience of the local community. "Citrus is now moving and disruption has been minimised. People are working hard and can catch up with the delays in about eight to nine days," he said.

Last year South Africa packed 24.8 million 15kg cartons of Navels and 52.1 million 15kg cartons of Valencias for export to foreign markets.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>

