Dr Boitshoko Ntshabele
17 April 2026
Week 16/26

FROM THE DESK OF THE CEO

"Be not afraid of growing slowly; be afraid only of standing still." (Chinese Proverb)

HOW THE MIDDLE EAST DEVELOPMENTS COULD COLOUR THE CITRUS SEASON

This week sees the possibility of a second round of talks between the United States and Iran within the context of a fragile two-week ceasefire agreement. All eyes are on this development as the impact of the hostilities are beginning to filter through the global economy – with everyone affected.

Reports are that South Africans are set for another hefty increase in fuel prices, which would be a serious blow for our industry. Fuel runs a significant portion of farm activities and fruit is transported from all areas to port, mainly via road transport. As we have indicated, our season is set to begin in earnest and already some of our exports to the Middle East have arrived late as shipping and port destinations are revised on an ongoing basis.

As the CGA, we note and are concerned by Transnet Port Terminals' announcement of additional container surcharges linked to ongoing hostilities in the Middle East. Whilst the proposed amount is not punishing in itself, it is the potential escalation in price that is worrisome. These developments once again underscore how global instability directly affects our producers' ability to compete in international markets.

The CGA has in recent times made a strategic choice and invested in strengthening our data and market-intelligence capability. We have also established dedicated monitoring and review forums so that we can respond quickly, adjust our estimates in real time, and provide our stakeholders with the insights they need to make informed decisions across the logistics supply chain. Our priority remains clear: doing everything to support continuity of supply.

As the financial impact of the war starts to filter through – taken with the announced Transnet surcharge – we are seeing what could become hallmarks of a challenging export season. Citrus production and export operate on tight margins, and growers are already absorbing rising input, fuel, and energy costs. Additional port-related charges could place a further strain on an industry that is already under pressure, with smaller and emerging producers particularly exposed. If sustained, this could have serious consequences for livelihoods and rural economies that depend on citrus.

This situation reinforces the urgent need to strengthen the overall future environment for the exports of citrus, South Africa's largest agricultural export sector. Government support will be critical. In the immediate term, this includes more targeted fuel-relief measures, as called for by Agbiz and AgriSA. Looking ahead, accelerating improved and new market access, pushing ahead with negotiations for lowered tariffs, along with enabling private-sector participation in ports and rail, will be essential to improving resilience.

These interventions are not abstract policy issues – they directly affect growers on the ground, their workers, and the communities they support. Getting them right will help ensure that our citrus industry can withstand periods of severe pressure and continue to deliver value for South Africa.

CITRUS MARKETING FORUM

The second Citrus Marketing Forum (CMF) meeting will be held on **Friday, 24 April** at **10:00 am** via **MS Teams**. Please contact Portia Magwaza at portia@cga.co.za to receive the registration link.

INTERESTING FACTS

When grapefruit was first discovered in Barbados, it was called the "forbidden fruit".

CGA GROUP INFO

CITRUS MARKETING FORUM (CMF)

Date: 24 April 2026
Time: 10:00am
Venue: Virtual
Link: Contact portia@cga.co.za