



## SA citrus sector expects record export season to the United States

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Western Cape and Northern Cape citrus growers are expecting another bumper export season to the United States (US), with approximately 60 000 tons of citrus being sent from Cape Town to the port of Philadelphia in 2020. This is a 9% increase from the previous record set in 2018 when 55 000 tons of citrus were shipped.

The 230 Southern African growers who export to the US currently employ around 30 000 workers from rural communities. This increase in exports means that we are likely to see a corresponding increase in jobs created on these farms.

## Growing demand overseas

These growers are represented by the umbrella body Summer Citrus under which all South African citrus fruit is sold to the US. Summer Citrus was established in 1999 to consolidate all logistics, marketing and sales efforts aimed at increasing market access during the US summer season. This programme has resulted in the volume of citrus exported to the US, increasing by 60% over the past ten years.

The growth this year is largely a result of both an increase in the production of mandarins, as well as an increase in demand for these easy peelers in the US.

“While exports of clementines have concluded, the industry is now in full production of later mandarin varieties, which will arrive in the US on weekly conventional and container vessels throughout August and September. There has also been an increase in the shipment of oranges, in particular summer navels, due to a growth in demand from US consumers, which has more than likely been as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and people wanting to consume more Vitamin C,” says Suhanra Conradie, CEO of Summer Citrus.

“The COVID-19 pandemic and national lockdown have presented some logistical challenges for growers exporting from the Cape Town port to the US over the past few weeks. However, Summer Citrus, along with its partners, has managed to adapt to these supply chain issues fairly quickly and has been able to continue shifting the volumes planned at the start of the season,” says Conradie.

## Plans to expand

The US has been identified as one of the key markets for further expansion as the South African citrus industry plans to increase its output by a further 500 000 tons over the next three to five years. Other key markets that have been identified for further growth and expansion are China, India, Philippines, Japan, Vietnam and the European Union, says Justin Chadwick, CEO of the Citrus Growers' Association.

With present exports to the US restricted to products from the Western and Northern Cape, growers in other regions are eagerly awaiting the conclusion of the long-delayed final rule for expanded access. This rule has been through all the technical processes and is now awaiting sign off by the US Secretary of Agriculture.

“South Africa is the second-largest exporter of fresh citrus in the world, despite only being the 11th largest producer. This impressive achievement is largely as a result of close collaboration and partnerships within the industry, including the Summer Citrus group.

The industry is expecting to export a record 141,3 million cartons of citrus in the 2020 season, and the Citrus Growers' Association looks forward to continue working with all growers, including the Summer Citrus group, to increase job creation and contribute to increase growth in the country,” says Chadwick. – *Press release, Citrus Growers Association*