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Citrus industry rakes in R20bn in exports, despite challenging events

25TH NOVEMBER 2019 BY: SIMONE LIEDTKE - WRITER

South Africa, which has packed 126-million cartons of citrus fruit for export globally, remains the second-largest global exporter of citrus fruit and, despite events such as drought and container terminal delays, the industry continues to rake export revenue of R20-billion a year into the country, says Citrus Growers Association (CGA) CEO **Justin Chadwick**.

In a statement on Monday, he points out that while this year's packed total is lower than last year's bumper crop of 136-million boxes, production remains very high, with the industry remaining a valuable source of income and jobs for South Africa.

He explains that dry conditions in the northern areas of the country have affected some growers and have squeezed production levels.

Chadwick comments that, fortunately, however, "South Africa has a diverse spread of growing regions that means the decline remains within the acceptable targets established by the industry".

While orange and grapefruit production has suffered, soft citrus and lemons have exceeded last year's production – where one major region suffered a decline, other regions offered rich pickings with

production over their original estimates, balancing out the scales, the statement elaborates.

The extended strike at the Ngqura Container Terminal, near Port Elizabeth, as well as ongoing problems with infrastructure, staff and logistics at all South African ports, however, have “proved a nightmare for fresh produce exporters,” Chadwick adds.

In this respect, CGA has actively engaged with Public Enterprises Minister **Pravin Gordhan** to resolve the problems. Gordhan visited the Durban port on Monday to engage with exporters in the hope of finding constructive solutions to the problem.

The citrus industry exports to over 100 countries around the world and supports 120 000 jobs.

With support from government to expand market access and improve port infrastructure, Chadwick believes the industry is poised to drive the increased agricultural exports sought by Finance Minister **Tito Mboweni** in his national economic strategy. 🇿🇦

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