

New leaf for black growers

Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Minister, Senzeni Zokwana pledged his support to black growers at the launch of the Citrus Growers Association Grower Development Company, the transformation arm of the Citrus Growers Association of Southern Africa. The CGA Grower Development Company (CGAGDC) aims to bring black citrus growers into the mainstream of the agriculture economy.

Zokwana described the citrus industry as an important player in agriculture, accounting for the highest employment and export earnings in the agricultural sector. The CGA Grower Development Company will have expert capacity dedicated to ensure the maximum participation of black citrus growers in the citrus industry.



“The CGAGDC must make a meaningful contribution in its effort to improve the status of black growers. Let’s face the challenges of transformation head-on. I am elated that you did this without pressure from government and you have our support as a department,” the Minister said.

The transformation initiative aims to address challenges faced by many black growers, such as the need for viable, sustainable and profitable citrus growing businesses that contribute to the country’s economic growth, in pursuit of the national development plan objectives. During his keynote address, Minister Zokwana said his department will partner with the CGAGDC to achieve its mandate of supporting growers in their business endeavours.

At the launch, Dr Mono Mashaba, Chairman of the CGAGDC, said that farmer development in South Africa is a big challenge and that for black farmers to succeed in the sector, they need to export about 80% of their produce. He expressed concern that the Land Bank and the governments’ CASP for instance, do not fund orchards.

“Sometimes it seems like we take two steps forward and two steps back as an industry. We need to do things right and commit ourselves to move forward. We can create some of the 1 million jobs highlighted by the National Development Plan for agriculture – by 2030 – but we need to hold hands and support each other,” he said.

Outlook for 2016 season

The Citrus Marketing Forum (CMF) of Southern Africa met recently to consider the growers’ estimate for expected Southern African citrus and concluded that the industry was well positioned to meet their market requirements in 2016. A total of 111.2 million – in 15 kilogram equivalent cartons of citrus from Southern

Africa, including Zimbabwe and Swaziland is expected to be packed and passed for export in 2016. This translates to a decrease of about six percent on last year's crop.

According to Justin Chadwick, CEO of CGA whilst the drought that has gripped the country was expected by many to have a massive effect, the reality is that the real effects of the continued drought will only be seen in the 2017 export crop. Drought in the northern citrus growing areas of Limpopo province and Mpumalanga has indeed resulted in lower estimates for grapefruit and Valencia oranges, with expectations of smaller than normal sized fruit.

"The large Valencia orange and grapefruit producing region of Hoedspruit suffered the most with a massive hail storm adding to their drought woes. Their expected Valencia crop is down 36% from the 3.3 million cartons exported last year, whilst their grapefruit crop is expected to be 42% lower. On the positive side, the dry conditions result in sweeter fruit and the general quality is expected to be excellent," he said in his weekly CGA update report.

Grapefruit yields in the northern regions tend to be cyclical, and the effects of the drought are exaggerated by this being an "off" year. However grapefruit growers are confident they will be able to serve all the markets with the available fruit, although it may be half a count smaller. With oranges down seven percent, grapefruit down twenty three percent, lemons up seven percent and soft citrus up twelve percent, the expectation is an overall six percent downturn in export volumes compared to last year, indicating a stable outlook and reason for growers and exporters to be cautiously optimistic.

**Picture: Israel Nemaorani of Easy Farm in Thohoyandou in Limpopo*

By [Camille](#) | March 30th, 2016 | [Fruit SA, News](#) | [0 Comments](#)



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