

South Africa citrus exports face market and logistics pressure

South Africa is entering a key phase in its agricultural cycle, with the citrus and strawberry harvest and export season starting at the end of April.

Citrus volumes for export are expected to increase by around 3 to 5 per cent, reaching between 210 million and 215 million 15 kg cartons in 2026. These volumes will require sufficient access to export markets.

Domestic ports operated efficiently in the previous season, supporting export flows. However, export markets remain a concern. The Middle East, an important destination, may remain difficult to access, while competition from South America is expected to increase.

Producers are also monitoring shipping costs and logistics, which remain key factors during the export season.

Weather conditions are another consideration for the period ahead. The South African Weather Service indicated that "during the autumn and early winter, it is only the southern and eastern coastal areas that receive significant rainfall. For these areas, the south-eastern and eastern coastal areas are expected to receive above-normal rainfall, and the south-western parts below-normal rainfall".

The Western Cape, where a large share of citrus production is located, is included in the areas expected to receive below-normal rainfall. Further updates are expected to provide more clarity on seasonal conditions.

Logistics and market access remain central to the outlook. Higher fuel costs, rising shipping costs, and disruptions affecting key export regions are factors influencing export planning.

As the season progresses, coordination between industry and government will be required to support market access and manage export volumes.

Source: Wandile Sihlobo (<https://wandile.substack.com/p/south-africas-agriculture-enters>)

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