

REPORT  
—Citrus

# Ready for a record

CAPE TOWN—South African citrus exports are forecast to rise above 140m cartons this year, an increase of 13 per cent on the previous campaign.

by Fred Meintjes

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BELOW—Lemons make up 18 per cent of the overall citrus crop  
BOTTOM—Soft citrus could enjoy volume growth of 28 per cent


agricultural exports over the next few years.

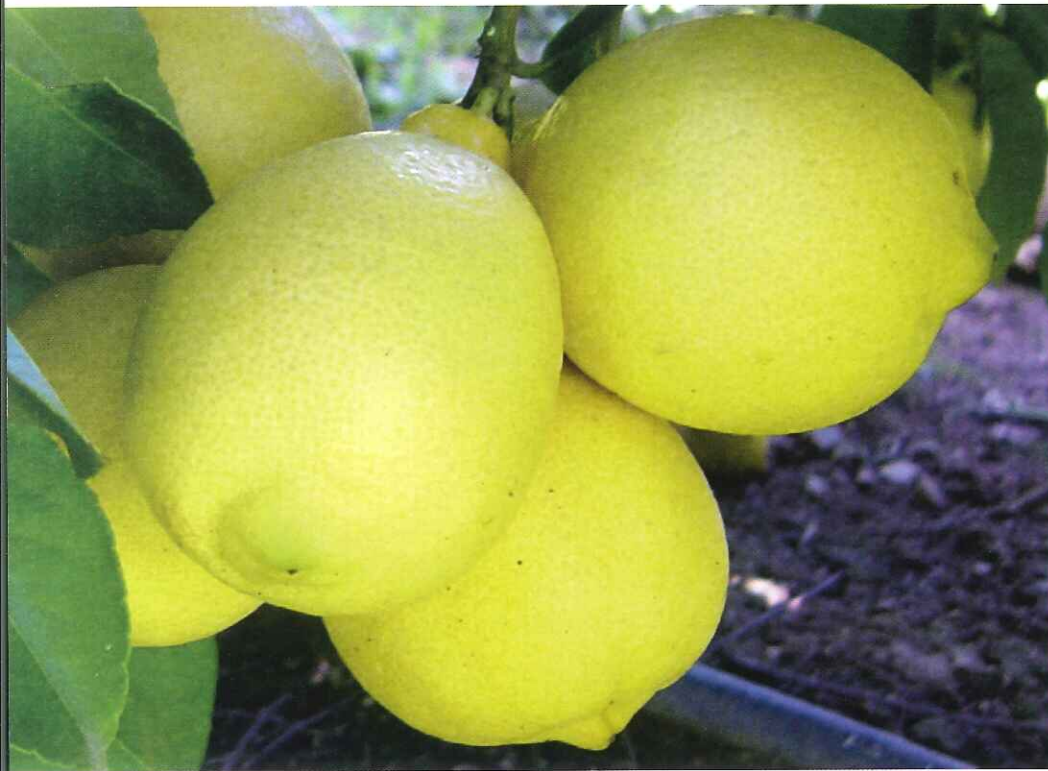
The Citrus Growers' Association (CGA) forecasts a rise of 13 per cent compared with last year's export figure – 143.3m cartons compared to 2019's 126.7m cartons. Observers say that the forecast reflects the heavy planting of new orchards in recent times, and is a resumption of the steep growth in exports experienced during the last few years – although 2019 did see a decline when compared with the previous season. In terms of the long-term growth forecast, this year's crop confirms that the country is on track to reach a target of 160m cartons within a few years.

The CGA says that growth this year is largely a result of new orchards coming into production and good rains across some regions. Valencia oranges, at 35 per cent, make up the biggest portion of the citrus export crop, followed by Navel oranges (19 per cent), lemons (18 per cent), soft citrus (16 per cent) and grapefruit (12 per cent).

The soft citrus and lemon categories are expected to show the highest growth in 2020. Soft citrus will see an increase of 28 per cent, with the Boland region contributing 12 per cent more cartons than last year.

Regions in the northern part of the country, including Burgersfort, Ohrigstad, Senwes and Hoedspruit, will also see exponential growth in their soft citrus outputs. The Sundays River Valley, which exports almost half of the region's lemons, is expected to export 12m cartons this year, an 18 per cent increase from 2019. The northern regions, Nelspruit, Letsitele and Burgersfort/Ohrigstad, will also show massive growth ranging from 40 to 55 per cent compared with last year.

The CGA warns that there may be factors that affect the outcome of the season. "While we are confident that the 2020 season will be a success, we are also aware that there are events beyond growers' control that could impact final export numbers." 



**T**he South African citrus industry has forecast another record export crop for 2020, coming at a time when the country's government has announced extreme measures to cope with the effects of coronavirus.

This harvest is expected to generate around R20bn in export revenue and will sustain 120,000 jobs. The industry says this increase should translate into more job opportunities, higher foreign exchange revenue and will contribute towards the national government's goal of increased