

Boitshoko Ntshabele 25 April 2025

"Your legacy is being written by yourself. Make the right decisions." —Gary Vaynerchuk

DATA-DRIVEN DECISION MAKING INDISPENSABLE FOR GROWTH

The 2025 citrus export season has begun in earnest and farmers are harvesting and packing their fruit, and containers filled with lemons, oranges, grapefruit and mandarins are being trucked to ports and shipped to over 100 global destinations. Supporting all this, is a less visible tracking network of information which enables stakeholders to take informed decisions. CGA's citrus growers' function within a fast-moving and complicated export trade environment. With global trade experiencing unprecedented instability, it has become even more important for growers to remain informed and have the facts at their fingertips. The more granular your information, the better your decision making!

These figures aren't just cold, hard data - they translate directly into jobs and the livelihoods that support many rural communities. As a general rule of thumb, every additional 10 million cartons of citrus South Africa exports create close to 10 000 jobs.

Live Dashboards: One of the services provided by the CGA for its members is a live statistics dashboard that tracks the citrus export season in full detail and almost in real-time. The dashboard system offers an enlightening example of how farmers can stay updated and make informed decisions. It is hosted on the CGA's website and provides an overview of how the citrus season unfolds daily. Data is sourced from industry associations, government departments or institutions, international data groups, or by the CGA and its subsidiaries directly. The challenge lies in ensuring that information is not only available, but is understandable to all farmers. Industry associations, government agencies, and research institutions play a crucial role in collecting, analysing, and disseminating relevant data in a timely and user-friendly manner. An example, as the season is ramping up: between 14 and 20 April just over 2.5 million cartons of citrus were packed for export.

Tree Census: CGA's tree census data track the number of trees planted and is annually updated to include tree varieties, ages and hectares under cultivation by growing region. This is invaluable for long-term planning. More immediate figures are included in the CGA's live dashboard. Weekly packing by region and variety can be tracked. Through tracking the "count group" (the number of fruit packed in a single box) users get an accurate reflection of the size distribution of the fruit for the season - down to the variety group level. Since different markets have different sizing preferences, this information assists in ensuring that all markets are serviced in a balanced manner. A grower can also track the shipping of exports from specific ports - down to cartons shipped by vessel and destination. Stock levels can also be monitored. As an example, "depot stock by trade destination by dwell time" is just one way the data is ordered. All information is in an aggregated format, to ensure absolute anonymity of individual grower or exporter positions.

The future of the citrus industry hinges on its ability to adapt and innovate. Embracing industry statistics is not an answer to every problem, but it is an indispensable tool for any farmer striving for long-term profitability.

From next week, we will be sharing the weekly export volumes per variety in the customary table at the bottom of this newsletter. We hope to track a prosperous season for all our growers.