

"Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or the present are certain to miss the future." John F. Kennedy

TRADE OPPORTUNITIES IN TURBULANT TIMES

The old saying 'every dark cloud has a silver lining' is very relevant now. While trade turmoil and geopolitical events unsettle us, they have also injected a much-needed dose of urgency. It is worth taking a glance at some of the important markets for SA citrus with this in mind.

CHINA: The Chinese government announced on 12 June an offer to extend duty-free market access to African countries and also eliminate tariffs on 98% of taxable products originating from these nations. This was in advance of the CGA, working with FruitSA, undertaking a working visit to the Onderberg production area. We showcased to a delegation from the Chinese embassy our high standard of citrus production and biosecurity. We thank the regional directors Cornel van Der Merwe and Andrew Muller for supporting the CGA during the visit. This was one of the many stakeholder engagements the CGA regularly undertakes with embassies - a bit of 'show and tell' to strengthen relations.

US: There is considerable doubt about the renewal of AGOA by the Trump administration. AGOA is a unilateral trade agreement offered by the US Administration to African countries and is up for renewal in September. Many analysts suggest a new preference to rather enter bilateral frameworks by the current US administration. The suspension of a 30% tariff on all imports from SA by the Trump administration will technically lapse soon, unless renewed. A South African delegation travelled to the US in May and tabled a proposal of a trade package and now await further engagement from the US towards concluding the trade talks. It must be noted that this proposal was done relatively quickly and shows some agility on the part of the trade section at the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (dtic).

INDIA: In April, on returning from India, we reported on work that was undertaken toward improving market access, as well as the initiation of market development and promotional activities. Ongoing citrus promotions there introduces more Indian consumers to the exceptional taste of SA citrus. It also builds on the growing friendship and trade ties between SA and India. The new promotional activities (in-store promotions, product sampling, influencer partnerships, social media engagement, and collaborations with retailers and distributors) are linked to those undertaken by Hortgro under the banner of the 'Beautiful country, beautiful fruit, exceptional taste' slogan. High tariffs in India continue to be a serious hurdle with some respite on the phytosanitary side on the horizon. We are expecting visits by the ministers of Trade and Agriculture to India, with the hope that they will resolve these trade issues there.

The above cases show that in the current climate, opportunities exist for the expeditious resolution of some trade issues with different markets. We have seen a number of 'trade agreements' concluded in the shortest time ever. As South Africa, we were able to, within a very short space of time, put together a proposal for consideration by our US counterparts. The proposal from China to the 53 African countries also happened with speed. The dtic should not let the 'crisis' go to waste. Our industry requires improved market access across the board, as well as new markets, if we are to achieve our goal of creating 100 000 new jobs through the massive growth in production that is forecast. The dtic should build upon the work already done and ensure South Africa can benefit from the timely conclusion of agreements.

PACKED AND SHIPPED

End of Week 25 million 15 Kg Cartons	Packed	Packed	Packed	Shipped	Shipped	Original Estimate	Latest Prediction	Final Packed	Vision 260
SOURCE: PPECB/AGRIHUB	2023	2024	2025	2024	2025	2025	2025	2024	2025
Grapefruit	10.9 m	11.3 m	11.3 m	9.9 m	10.5 m	15.3 m	15.0 m	14.4 m	16.8 m
Lemons	24.7 m	22.0 m	24.9 m	19.3 m	23.4 m	32.9 m	34.3 m	34.7 m	41.5 m
Mandarins	16.4 m	15.9 m	19.5 m	12.8 m	16.6 m	44.9 m	45.3 m	41.6 m	43.9 m
Navels	12.2 m	11.1 m	13.5 m	7.7 m	10.6 m	26.1 m	26.0 m	25.1 m	21.7 m
Valencia	3.9 m	3.3 m	5.3 m	1.6 m	3.3 m	52.0 m	52.0 m	48.8 m	58.0 m
Total	68.1 m	63.6 m	74.5 m	51.3 m	64.4 m	171.1 m	172.6 m	164.6 m	181.9 m