



MINISTER
AGRICULTURE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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MEDIA STATEMENT

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MINISTER STEENHUISEN HAILS AMENDMENT TO CITRUS EXPORT PROTOCOL WITH CHINA

The Minister of Agriculture, John Steenhuisen, welcomes the successful amendment of the cold treatment requirements regulating the export of South African citrus to the People's Republic of China (PRC), describing it as a big step forward in expanding trade opportunities and deepening an already strong partnership. It will cement our position as the biggest exporter of citrus to the PRC.

The new treatment options are expected to improve export efficiencies, reduce costs for producers and exporters, and ensure that even higher-quality fruit reaches Chinese consumers. In practical terms, this will help South African citrus continue to grow its presence in a market that is both dynamic and increasingly important to our agricultural sector.

China remains one of South Africa's most valued agricultural trading partners. In 2025, exports of citrus to China and Hong Kong accounted for approximately 11,5 million cartons, representing around 6% of total citrus exports, with clear potential for further growth as demand continues to expand.

This latest progress builds on a series of important trade gains, including the recent opening of the Chinese market to South African stone fruit; namely, apricots, peaches, nectarines, plums and prunes. Together, these developments reflect a relationship that is not only growing but delivering real opportunities for South African farmers and exporters.

“South Africa places a high value on its relationship with China, which continues to create meaningful opportunities across our agricultural sector,” said Minister Steenhuisen. “These

agreements are the result of trust, respect and sustained cooperation, and they are helping open doors for our producers at a time when diversification has never been more important.”

South Africa firmly supports China’s One China Policy, which recognises the government of the People's Republic of China as the sole legitimate authority representing China. In practical terms, this provides a stable and trusted foundation for cooperation between our two countries. For the agricultural sector, this certainty translates into smoother negotiations on export protocols, faster resolution of phytosanitary issues, and expanded opportunities for South African products to enter and grow in the Chinese market. More broadly, it strengthens investor confidence, supports trade growth, and helps unlock logistics and infrastructure partnerships, all of which are critical to driving economic growth, job creation, and long-term food security in South Africa.

The citrus industry remains a cornerstone of South Africa’s agricultural performance. In 2025, Southern Africa exported approximately 204 million cartons of citrus, with South Africa contributing approximately 193 million cartons. Export earnings exceeded US\$2 billion for the first time, reaching an estimated US\$2,47 billion.

This sector supports approximately 140 000 direct jobs at farm and packhouse level, with significantly broader employment across logistics, export services and international distribution. The continued expansion of citrus exports consequently plays a crucial role in sustaining rural livelihoods and driving inclusive economic growth.

The minister emphasised that Government will continue working closely with industry stakeholders, including the Citrus Growers’ Association of Southern Africa (CGA), to strengthen trade relationships, uphold phytosanitary standards, and support the long-term growth of the sector.

“This is the kind of progress we are working to replicate across the sector – strong partnerships, growing markets, and real opportunities flowing back to farmers and rural communities,” Minister Steenhuisen said.

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