

Black citrus growers see 40% increase in production figures

Black citrus growers have achieved a 40% increase in production during the 2019-2020 citrus season. Several farms and black growers have increased output by over 40,000 cartons - with one black grower increasing production by 99 000 cartons in just one year. This according to The Citrus Growers Association (CGA) and its Grower Development Company (GDC).



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The harvest records also reveal that, locally, black citrus growers have increased output to domestic markets by 55% since 2019. Last year, black citrus growers provided over 400,000 cartons of fruit to South African grocery stores and supermarkets. In addition, more than 75% of black citrus growers in South Africa export their produce to global markets.

These figures show that the growth of the citrus industry in recent years has been inclusive, and that transformation – one of the fundamental objectives of the organised citrus industry – is picking up pace.

The CGA-GDC helps facilitate and support the establishment and empowerment of black citrus growers through assistance with:

- Production infrastructure (irrigation, mechanisation, building structures and other general farm equipment)
- Technical support and business management support to assist growers with the commercialisation of their fruit in South African stores
- Achieving regulatory compliance, to become accredited exporters to the global market

Lukhanyo Nkombisa, CGA GDC general manager, says that these successes are testament to the groundwork that has been laid over the last decade: "The citrus industry has spent over 10 years creating structures such as the Citrus Grower Development Chamber (CGDC) to assist, guide and advise the CGA-GDC on the needs of black citrus growers, so that the GDC may provide them with the support they need to thrive.

"The CGDC is run by black producers who ensure that the citrus industry is committed to supporting the initiatives that will result in the establishment of an inclusive citrus industry, with a sound transformation agenda."

These transformation initiatives are partly made possible by the new statutory export citrus levy, gazetted In December last year by Minister Thoko Didiza. The levy will be funded by 1,250 citrus growers over the next four years with 20% of the new levy being allocated to the development of black citrus growers.

This funding will be invested in the CGA's recently finalised four-year Transformation Plan, which will be implemented in 2021 through the CGA-GDC and Citrus Academy. **The plan will focus on:**

- The provision of enterprise and supplier development programmes to black growers;
- The provision of skills development programmes to black growers;
- The roll-out of socio-economic development programmes in rural communities;
- Ensuring the sustainable growth of black owned enterprises; and,
- Greater representation of black growers in industry leadership positions.

Justin Chadwick, CEO of the CGA, says: "The Agriculture and Agro processing Master Plan (AAMP) is an initiative of the Presidency to stimulate inclusive growth in the agricultural sector. The CGA has committed to the development of this plan. With a solid base of successful black citrus growers, initiatives driven by the CGA GDC will assist in ensuring sustainable development."

Over the past year, we've also witnessed South Africa's unemployment rate sky-rocket to an all-time high – with the outbreak of Covid-19 resulting in widespread joblessness and business closures. At a time when many have been left devastated by the global pandemic – black citrus growers are able to provide employment to over 7,000 permanent and seasonal staff. This is a phenomenal achievement – and encapsulates the adage "empowered people, empower people."