

Citrus industry rolls out recovery plan amid riots

The citrus value chain has been affected by the wave of looting and arson that recently swept across KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) and Gauteng. According to the Citrus Growers' Association of Southern Africa (CGA), the citrus industry was most critically affected by the closure of the Durban port.



Source: [123RF](#)

Producers in the northern provinces of Limpopo and Mpumalanga have been diverting their fruit to other ports across the country. Citrus from other regions continue to be exported from Cape Town and Coega ports. The events had little impact on volumes of citrus being exported to markets including the European Union, Middle East, China, and the United States.

To ensure the full recovery of the entire value chain in KZN, the CGA has been engaging stakeholders in both the public and private sector to get an update on the situational analysis on the ground and to identify any risks. Through CGA's membership at Agbiz, this information is then provided to government on a continuous basis.

With calm having been restored in most parts of KZN, the Durban port as well as arterial routes and railways to the port have reopened. All citrus fruit cold storage facilities in the province are also fully secured and operational.

While the port is receiving reefer containers, shipping delays are expected due to bottlenecks caused by the looting. This could also have a knock-on effect at ports in the Eastern and Western Cape that rely on reefer containers flowing from the Durban port. The industry has therefore urgently called for ports to open for 24 hours to catch up on backlogs and ensure the export season continues to run smoothly.

Traffic is also flowing on the N2 and N3. However, many trucking businesses were affected by the violence, which means truck supply is stretched in the region. Many truckers are also only prepared to transport cargo during the day, considering ongoing security concerns. The CGA has therefore requested that South African Defence Force (SANDF) troops continue to man both highways to allow for trucks to run 24 hours a day.

The industry has also called for SANDF troops to continue to be deployed to other key sites across the citrus value chain, including Durban port, the Natal Corridor (Natcor) railway, land food distribution centres, and cold stores in hotspot areas such as Hammersdale and Cato Ridge. Most importantly, the safety of workers travelling to their workplaces also needs to be guaranteed.

With food shortages still posing an immediate threat in several areas in KZN, the citrus industry is also engaging government on any assistance it can provide to deliver food and necessities to communities affected by the unrest.

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