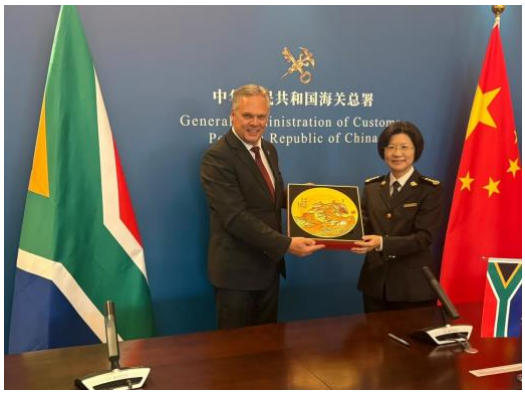
Fruit SA Newsletter: Sep–Oct ’26

A visual story

The Fruit SA/Department of Agriculture (DoA) delegation on recent visits to the Philippines and Japan

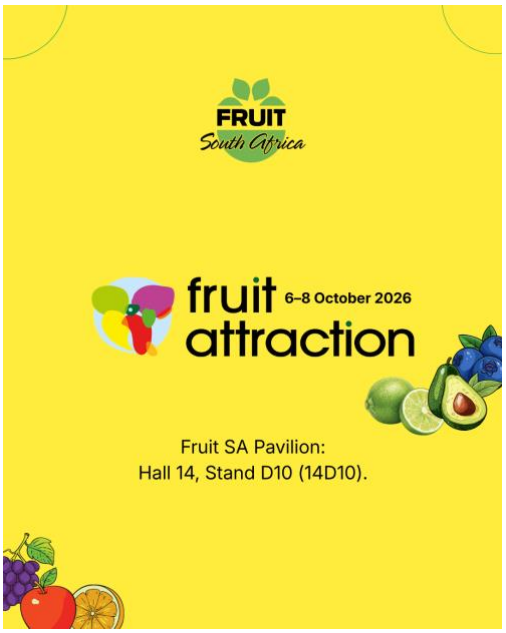
Fruit SA and industry colleagues at the Celebration of 77th anniversary of the Founding of the People’s Republic of China; and joined by other stakeholders at the Day of German Unity

SA representation at the SA-China Fruit Trade Business Forum



The signed protocol that gave South African cherries official access to the Chinese market. Agriculture Minister Willie Aucamp (left) and Sun Meijun, Minister of the General Administration of Chinese Customs; and with Hortgro CEO Jacques du Preez. Photos by Hortgro.

A Fruit SA and DoA delegation that visited Thailand. Left: SA Ambassador to Thailand Mr Darkey Africa and Mr Eric Mudau from the DoA. Right: with a leading Thai importer of SA's fruit.



FRUIT South Africa

ASIA FRUIT LOGISTICA 2|3|4 September 2026 ASIA FRUIT LOGISTICA

Fruit SA at Fruit Attraction Madrid and Asia Fruit Logistica

CEO's note

I am encouraged by the fruits of government's and industry players' efforts in growing our share in the Asian market, while we continue to pursue growth in our traditional global markets.

In this newsletter edition last year, our market-access celebration hinged on the signed protocol for South African stone-fruit exports to China. And cherries have followed since.

This shared victory comes from the industry's collaborative work with government – a major motivator to maintain focus.

At the time of writing, there were 70 days left until the end of 2026 – that's 1 680 hours.

May we continue to work together closely to make an impact where we can and focus on that which we can still control.

And here's wishing our growers well with the harvesting of stone fruit, table grapes, mangoes and litchis.

Transformation

Fruit SA-FPEF Transformation Showcase

Fhumulani Ratshitanga, Phil Bowes and Karen Kleinbooi (both from Wine SA), and Zama Sangweni (panellist)

In September, Fruit SA and the Fresh Produce Exporters' Forum (FPEF) collaborated to host the fourth industry transformation showcase. Delegates comprised representatives from government, banking, Transnet, as well as industry players.

The showcase sought to highlight the rationale and inputs that drive industry transformation initiatives, the systemic challenges that hamper its momentum and impact, and relevant successes. This part of the programme also gave delegates context around FPEF and the second half of the fruit value chain within which it operates.

In the latter part of the day, the annual FPEF Young Professionals Network session gave delegates a glimpse into the outputs of the FPEF Graduate Placement Programme. Graduates placed in permanent roles through the Programme, shared their insights and experiences to inspire their peers.

The industry stands to make great gains in transformation if players align and continue to collaborate and evaluate methods.

Here's a **visual snapshot of the event**.

How have our black growers fared?

Generally, black growers are navigating a lag in terms of generational wealth and industry knowledge, as well as running capital to absorb shocks.

Notwithstanding these significant hindrances, a comparative look at their performance during 2024–2025 (Figure 1), shows remarkable resilience.

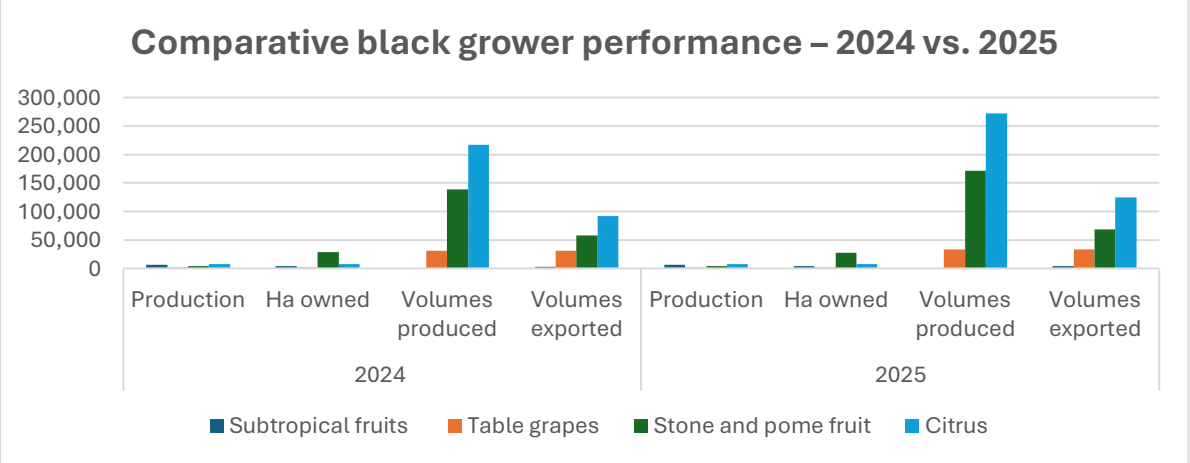


Figure 1: Leading with citrus, grower performance metrics show a general upward trajectory

Gradually, production should continue to trend upwards, as newer orchards that were part of the replacement process, start to mature and yield.

Transformation Annual Review Executive Summary

The 2025 Transformation Annual Review Executive Summary is now available. For download, click on the image.

Market access

The growing importance of GRO

In the South African fruit industry, we understand the importance of treating the three elements of the GRO (gain, retain, optimise) industry market-access strategy as being mutually inclusive.

This approach, and the growing partnerships within the industry, as well as with external stakeholders, are yielding far-reaching results.

The latest advancements in market access came in the form of the signed protocol for export of South African cherries to China, and the approval by India for in-transit cold treatment for South African fresh citrus exports. These bring hope for our other fruit commodities that haven't yet gained access to the Asian market.

A compounding effect

Much like the concept of compound interest, inputs into fulfilling the market-access objectives of the industry have had a cumulative effect.

Every phone call, courtesy visit and meeting counts.

Hence, Fruit SA prioritises these engagements, undertaken alongside government representatives and industry colleagues.

East and Southeast Asia rank high in the industry's market diversification strategy. Therefore, the recent visits to the Philippines, Japan and Thailand, featured in the visual story above, are significant investments into these critical bilateral relationships, for continued export of our premium-quality fruit. Equally significant was the South Africa-China Fruit Trade Business Forum that a Fruit SA delegation participated in. It was co-hosted by Fruit SA, the DoA, and the Embassy of the Republic of SA in China.

High production volumes require relative market absorption

The steady average upward trajectory in the yields of our orchards and vineyards (Figure 2) bodes well for the industry.

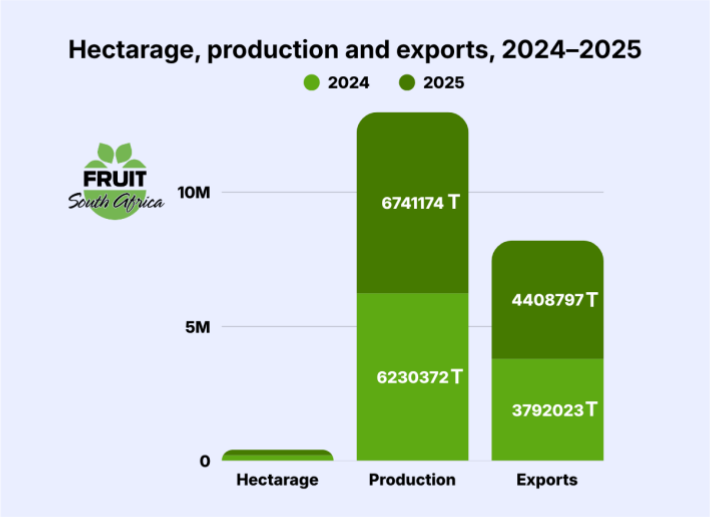


Figure 2: Substantive production volumes require adequate global markets for South African fruit

However, faced with a growing need for greater market share to match industry production volumes, players remain reliant on government to continue negotiating trade agreements that drive market access and favourable trade conditions.