HORTGRO Pome
Growing Fruit IQ
home of the south african apple and pear producer

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Press Release

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The 2026 South African Pome Fruit Industry heading into a dynamic season

The 2025 apple export season ended at a high of 49.6 million equivalent cartons (12.5 kg). The initial estimate for the 2026 export season indicates a 5% increase in volumes, bringing expected apple exports to 52.2 million equivalent cartons. The growth in export volumes is attributed to increased production as young orchards reach full production, improved orchard performance and the recovery from challenges experienced in the previous season.

Pear export volumes, however, are expected to decrease slightly compared to the previous season. The current estimate for the 2026 pear export season is 22.3 million equivalent cartons, a 4% decline from 2025. The reduction is mainly attributed to orchard removals, smaller fruit size and the exceptionally strong export volumes achieved in certain pear varieties during the previous season.

At this stage, climatic conditions have resulted in an earlier start to the season, currently estimated at 7-10 days earlier than last year, particularly in the Elgin Grabouw Villiersdorp Vyeboom region. Water constraints experienced in some of the growing areas including the Langkloof and Klein Karoo regions remain a concern. Overall fruit quality remains good, although volume potential is constrained in certain regions.

Red bi-coloured apples such as Royal Gala are expected to drive the bulk of the volume increase, with Royal Gala/Gala types export volumes projected to increase by 12% compared to last season. Although fruit size is smaller at this stage, we still anticipate increased export volumes given the favourable growing conditions and young orchards coming into production.

Golden Delicious export volumes are expected to decline by 3%. The 2025 season marked a record year for Pink Lady® exports and with additional orchards continuing to come into production, Cripps Pink/Pink Lady® export volumes for the 2026 season are estimated to increase by a further 5%.

There is also a positive outlook for Cripps Red/Joya®, with many orchards reaching their peak production phase. Export volumes for this variety are projected to increase by 4%. Fuji apples had an average export season in 2025; however, with new plantings maturing and improved yields anticipated, export volumes are expected to increase by 11% in 2026.

Export volumes for Packham's Triumph are expected to decrease by 3%, mainly due to orchard removals and a continued shift towards alternative varieties. Forelle pear export volumes are expected to remain in line with 2025.

Abate Fetel experienced a very strong export season in 2025, and export volumes for 2026 are expected to decline by 9%. Williams' Bon Chretien export volumes are projected to decrease by 10%, primarily due to smaller fruit size. Sempre and Rosemarie pear exports are also expected to be lower, with estimated declines of 9% and 4%, respectively. In general, fruit quality remains good, although smaller fruit size is expected to affect overall export volumes.

Logistical Considerations

The Port of Cape Town is under pressure due to high volumes of stone fruit and table grapes, wind delays and operational complexities. This pressure is expected to continue into the pome fruit season, presenting ongoing operational challenges for Transnet.

While new port equipment is being phased in, the industry anticipates initial teething issues associated with the introduction of new systems and machinery. As collective fruit industries, we continue to work closely with Transnet management and will do everything within our reach to ensure smooth logistical operations during the 2026 season.

Despite these challenges, the industry remains optimistic and committed to delivering high-quality South African apples and pears to global markets.

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