

Indian importer prepares for switch from Egyptian to South African citrus

"The Chinese mandarin is always a fast-selling fruit"

The import of citrus to India has hit a couple of bumps, as the logistics have been disrupted by the tensions in the Middle East, says Sagar Tikyani, owner of Indian produce importer Dilip Agro: "The citrus season has tested conventional wisdom, like it always does. We've had times where the prices have skyrocketed due to no availability, because of the ongoing tensions in Iran. This has indirectly impacted the routes that can be used when shipping oranges from Egypt to India. The shipping companies stopped taking the Suez Canal route, and we had to choose for options that traveled via the Cape of Good Hope. Overall, this has made it challenging for us to forecast the availability here. Talking about mandarins from China, there were too many containers that had arrived at the end of the season, because the prices had jumped in for a small window, which made everyone greedy to place their orders from China."



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Tikyani states that demand has been okay lately, but the weather has affected the consumers' eating habits. "The demand has not been that bad, but India has rains during this window, which naturally impacts the eating patterns and puts pressure on the movement of citrus. That being said, Indians have a sweet tooth. So, the Chinese mandarin, which is popularly called the mini orange, is always a fast-selling fruit. Whereas the Nadorcott variety from South Africa comes into play once the Chinese mandarin season is finished. Overall, both varieties are loved."

There's a big difference between the cities on how much they want to spend on citrus, and prices are currently increasing, Sagar explains: "Tier 1 cities undoubtedly have more fruit awareness, so they are happy to spend money on imported citrus, but for tier 3 cities it isn't realistic to see consumers happily pay a premium price for imported citrus or any imported fruit for that matter. Prices for citrus are only marginally going up, creeping closer and closer to the cost price. In order for prices to increase, there needs to be either increase in demand, or lower availability in the market. The prices are expected to go up for oranges, as expensive South African arrivals come to India, and for mandarins the same logic should follow."



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"We're currently in a transition phase, as Egyptian oranges will make room for South African oranges. We're also going to see arrivals of the South African Nadorcott mandarin, which is a fast-selling fruit among Indian consumers. The market continues to see robust growth in consumption of imported fruits in general. We are grateful for the constant support of our supply partners, who

continue to strive for quality. Other than a focus on the citrus season, we are open to trade relations for apples, kiwis, and dragon fruit in the future," Tikyani concludes.

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