“Within the next two weeks, the southern hemisphere citrus season will be in full play”

South Africa, Peru, Chile, Argentina, and Uruguay all send citrus fruit to the U.S. during the summer months. In some countries, volumes and quality have been impacted by weather conditions while others are sending larger volumes of fruit than normal. Miles Fraser-Jones of Lange's growing division, Lange Farms, provides insights for each of the growing countries and discusses what to expect this season.

South Africa: Impact of rainstorms
Next week, the first Navels and clementines from South Africa are expected to arrive on the U.S. East Coast. "This is fruit that was harvested before significant rainstorms impacted citrus growing regions in the country earlier this month," says Miles Fraser-Jones with Lange's growing division, Lange Farms. The extent of the damage is still being assessed, and more information will become available in the coming weeks.

South Africa is currently harvesting its early citrus fruit, and early Navel volume will be down as a result of the storms. "The extremely wet conditions are causing some fruit to fall from the trees, reducing the amount of marketable fruit available for harvest," shared Fraser-Jones. In addition to reduced volumes, the quality of the fruit has also been impacted by weather. "Given that only the highest quality fruit is being sent to the U.S., packout rates are lower, further reducing volumes," he added. The later Navel oranges weren't as mature when the storms hit and will be less impacted.

South Africa's clementine volume is expected to be down as well. The fruit has absorbed a lot of water and has grown in size as a result. "Some of the fruit has absorbed excess moisture, making the fruit soft and puffy and no longer suitable for the U.S. market." Again, it's mainly the early volume that suffered from the storms. Later clementine varieties like Nova and Nadorcott will be in better shape.

Overall, the season saw an earlier start than normal. The first one or two container loads set to arrive in the U.S. will contain fruit that was harvested before the storm. After the initial shipments, the volume will be reduced temporarily until the later varieties start shipping.


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Chile: concerns about El Niño

Lange team members visited Chile two weeks ago and shared there is concern about the potential impact of El Niño during the second half of Chile's citrus season. If El Niño comes to fruition, excessive rainfall is anticipated for August.

Early clementines from Chile are shipping now. They are on the smaller side, which is not favored by the U.S. market. Extremely hot weather in January and February caused the trees to stop growing, impacting the early clementine volume. "The industry will be watching sizing closely, as higher volumes of smaller fruit from Chile could create challenges for their market later in the season.," commented Fraser-Jones. Navel oranges on the other hand are progressing normally, and lemons are expected to show a 10 percent volume increase this season. "Currently, Argentina is actively shipping lemons, and it will be interesting to see how the market responds once Chile begins shipping later in the season."

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Clementines in the Ovalle region in Chile.

Argentina: increased lemon shipments to the U.S

Argentina mainly ships lemons to the U.S. and so far has shipped 50 percent more volume compared to the same time last year. About five weeks ago, the U.S. market started to look favorable for Argentina, in particular for small lemons. They are experiencing high demand due to a lack of small sizes from California. Another reason Argentina increased its shipments to the U.S. is increased competition in the world market. "As a result of problems in the Middle East, South Africa started shipping more lemons to Russia and Europe. These are markets Argentina is usually very active in, forcing the country to look at alternatives."

While the lemon market is currently still strong, the question is whether the U.S. market will be able to continue absorbing these large quantities for the remainder of Argentina's season. The country will continue to ship through mid-July before Chile ramps up.

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Peru: delayed start

Peru's early mandarin volume was delayed as the fruit struggled to get color. This was the result of warm weather experienced during the growing season. This situation has normalized, and the current mandarin volume is not affected. All in all, Peru is on track for a normal season. Overall, citrus volumes from the South American country are expected to show year-over-year growth as new orchards have been coming into production.

Uruguay

Uruguay is a smaller player but will continue to play a role in the U.S. market. While no volume growth is expected, shipped volumes will be consistent with previous seasons. Uruguay is now starting to ship mandarins and will also bring oranges and lemons into the U.S. over the course of their season.

Impact of economic conditions

After a delayed start, Peru's shipments to the U.S. are back on track and good volumes of fruit from South Africa and Chile are also expected to arrive in the short term. "Within the next two weeks, the southern hemisphere season will be in full play," said Fraser-Jones. Although this sounds promising, the state of the U.S. economy will likely have an impact on the season. "The spending capability of consumers has been greatly impacted by price increases, in particular the price of fuel," he shared. The question is how much are consumers willing to pay for imported citrus products, which tends to have a higher price tag.

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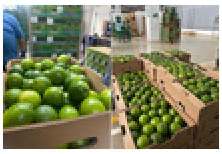

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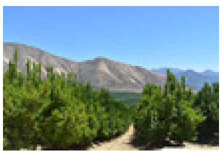

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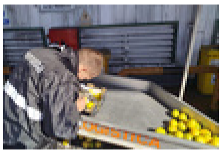

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