

Jaco Burger – Market Demand Fruits

Fruit quality is the only anchor in a choppy citrus season

Coinciding with the kickoff of the 2026 Football World Cup, Market Demand Fruits' first consignment of clementines and soft citrus to the United States will, it is their hope, be borne along by the festive spirit. "Our first fruit arrived and in very good condition – the clementines in better condition so far than last year - and we've been very pleased by the market appetite," says Jaco Burger.

The tournament has just started, and they hope it acts as a stimulus to citrus consumption. There hadn't been a lot of advance sales to clients in North America, he notes, but South Africa has sufficient product of high quality on the way to North America to sate soccer fans' citrus thirst. "We have more than enough fruit available for a strong appetite driven by the World Cup."

For over twenty years, Burger has managed the exports of the citrus grown by Market Demand Fruits' twelve shareholders from an interesting assortment of origins: Brits in the North West Province, Cookhouse in the Eastern Cape and then the whole of the Western Cape.



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Citrus prices (excepting lemons) lower than last season

The peace agreement signed between Iran and the United States is hopefully a done deal: they set much store by it to improve general trading conditions. Burger notes that shipping costs alone have risen by 5% to 8%. "With this agreement in place, prospects could be improving. With the citrus campaign at its halfway mark, we're hoping that demand from Europe will start picking up as well."

He remarks that it feels to him like the market in Europe is starting to move. "We're definitely hoping that the second half of the season will be an improvement on the first part of the season, on small and medium counts, I should note. On oranges, large counts will remain a problem. Large fruit markets are under a fair bit of pressure."

A side-effect of the unusually high rainfall across many production areas is the amount of large fruit in the bin this season. Egyptian oranges stuck around for a long time this season. "The market's been tough, on everything basically, save lemons, and general prices are lower than last year."

The lemon price is drifting from its previous heights because of a high supply from South America and South Africa: Chile and Argentina had sent 20% more lemons, and South Africa 50% more lemons to the UK this season, he says.



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This season, South Africa inherits a slow mandarin market in the Northern Hemisphere

Western Cape season will end earlier

South Africa inherited a difficult mandarin market in Europe where Northern Hemisphere product didn't shift quickly, and quality on Moroccan and Spanish mandarins was compromised by the excessive rainfall experienced.

Burger says in the Western Cape there's a general consensus that the navel crop will end early with much lower exports than usual. Western Cape citrus crops have sustained significant flood damage, as have orchards in Limpopo and Patensie, and his feeling is that the province will also end two to three weeks earlier.

"Quality is what will sell this season. Fruit of inferior quality, either externally or internally, will sell at the lowest prices and it will sell last."



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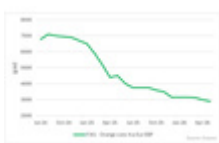
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