

Randolf Aaldijk, Origin Fruit Direct: lemon, mandarin and grapefruit market skyhigh
"South Africa treated unfairly in CBS measures"

The South African citrus season has started with high prices. "Of the four varieties, three are doing very well. For both lemons, mandarins and grapefruit the prices are skyhigh. There are only small volumes available and as soon as there is a shortage of something you see the prices go up," says Randolf Aaldijk of Origin Fruit Direct.



"Lemons have been doing well since the start of the season. Mandarins have also been doing well all season and you see more waves in grapefruit. The sales of oranges are a bit slower. The season started three weeks earlier, but there are also oranges from Spain, Greece, Egypt and Morocco on the market and they're bothering each other. Not all retailers have switched to South African oranges," continues the importer. "With these hugely high prices it can really only go one way and that's down, but when it will happen and to what extent is hard to estimate."



How the market will develop further isn't easy to predict according to Randolf. "Especially what will happen with lemons is hard to gauge. The question is what will come in from Argentina and South Africa. Mandarins and grapefruit will remain 'short' at the moment. I expect more volumes from oranges at the moment and if more retailer switch this will cause more demand. Then the quality and in particular the colouring will be better. The weather here has been cool for a long time, which is always good for the citrus consumption."



Black Spot

The black spot issue also continues to occupy the importers and producers. Recently Brussels has scrapped the '5 policy' for South Africa, although the additional demands for South African citrus remains in force. As of the current season, citrus from Uruguay has to meet the same demands as South Africa. "I don't think it's clearer. What we see is that the South African growers we work with are conscious of the importance of CBS. They have been investing in measures to get CBS under control for years and it is working."



"I dare say that out of all countries South Africa has CBS best under control, but if CBS is found on citrus from South Africa or Uruguay, the fruit has to be sent back or find a different destination outside the EU. If the citrus comes from Brazil - or a different third country - the fruit can also be destroyed (or processed into the juice industry) in the EU member states. I don't understand this inequality, but apparently there are higher powers at play."



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