Grapefruit may fail to hold its price

While grapefruit prices started high in China with big demand South African exporters are now nervous about late arrivals, as they don't think that the Chinese market will support those high prices for long.

A box of early grapefruit when packed had an indication price of 3-4 dollars more than it did last year. At the beginning of the season supply was low but there is now increasing volumes on the market.

"What normally happens with grapefruit is there is a big demand for the early fruit then the markets become flooded and it is hard to get a good price," explains Scott Dowle. "People have been trying, in the last couple of years, to spread the supply to stop this happening. The fruit from certain areas can hang on the trees until week 27-28 when the early big volumes have passed through the market."

The Hoedspruit area only has a small volume left to harvest while KwaZulu Natal will go until week 30-32. With regards to Europe, there has been good demand and prices, the supply of fruit has been limited as the season started late as growers were waiting for the fruit to colour.

According to Scott people will also be concerned about Navels going to the Middle East in the coming weeks, "The first Navels from the north were unexpectedly large so early fruit from there did not flood the Middle East market but there are concerns for the coming weeks about yellow fruit arriving on the market as the fruit from the Eastern Cape had in parts quality problems.

"The European market started positively though the large fruit from the north arrived quite yellow and pale in colour. The market is OK but we have not necessarily seen the high prices that were talked about when fruit was loaded," concludes Scott.

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