

Early end to South African citrus season

The citrus season in South Africa is nearing its end, and despite fears of drought, low volumes and very small sizes before the season started, it seems to have been a reasonably positive season.

The Valencia estimate was increased by ½ million cartons, but the total crop will still be 20% short of the 2015 record crop, and 10% off the initial estimate, according to the latest figures from the Citrus Grower's Association. The lemon volumes were also adjusted, up to 15.1 million cartons. The grapefruit and soft citrus packed figures are still seeing slight upward adjustments. The predicted total southern hemisphere export volume is now less than 2% lower than the March estimate.

To end Week 16/9/16 Million 15 Kg Cartons	Packed	Packed	Packed	Shipped	Shipped	Original Estimate	Latest Prediction	Final Packed
SOURCE: PFCEBAGRIHUS	2014	2015	2016	2015	2016	2016	2016	2015
Grapefruit	15.5 m	16 m	13.8 m	14.6 m	13.1 m	12.4 m	13.8 m	16.1 m
Soft Citrus	9.8 m	9.8 m	12.1 m	9.1 m	11.1 m	11.2 m	12.1 m	10 m
Lemons	13 m	14.6 m	14.7 m	14.3 m	14.4 m	16.1 m	15.1 m	15.1 m
Navels	25.9 m	24.4 m	26.2 m	23.2 m	25.4 m	25.1 m	26.2 m	24.5 m
Valencia	42.9 m	44.1 m	39.5 m	39.3 m	36.1 m	46.4 m	41.9 m	52.7 m
Total	107.1 m	108.9 m	106.2 m	100.5 m	100.1 m	111.2 m	109.1 m	118.4 m

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Piet Smit, Marketing Director of Favourite Fresh Export, said all harvesting and packing in the Western Cape has been completed, this is around two weeks earlier than normal and the overall crop is down in the region.

"Demand in Europe for juicing oranges was extremely strong due to the lack of juice sizes," explains Piet. "The north of the country had less small oranges, 73mm or smaller is what is needed for the juicing machines. I expect demand for the smaller sizes to remain until Spain comes on the market."

Demand for eating oranges in the EU was also very good as the market was under supplied and grower returns have been better than previous years.

Demand from the Middle East was also strong for the same reasons as Europe, a shortage of small sizes, 72 - 105. Most of the 11m carton deficit was in small sizes according to Piet.

"Late mandarin volumes will grow year on year due to new plantings and establishments of new growth. It has been a great mandarin season too with good demand, good quality and good markets," said Piet.

CBS results were positive this year, with only one interception recorded up to the end of August. "The industry has done a lot to control the Citrus Back Spot and it is really positive, they spent a lot of money to control the disease and if there was a risk of CBS, the shipments were diverted."

The water situation is looking positive in the Western Cape where they had good winter rains, more than in previous years, according to Piet it was almost an average rainfall and there is enough water to get through the summer.

In the north however, in areas such as Limpopo, there is a shortage of water. Levels are down between 20-40% of the normal supply and they will be in real trouble if they don't get rain in October, which is the rainy period. Crops which are in season now are being effected by the drought.

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