US provides nice window of opportunity for South African citrus

Citrus coming in from South Africa is “looking excellent” and demand is good, especially since California has been a bit lighter this year, according to Andy Economou of TastyFrutti. “It’s given us an opportunity, on the east coast at least, to market the product properly.”

Smaller sizes
South Africa has experienced some challenges with split in the oranges because of the weather, which has also affected sizing. Sizes of oranges are one size smaller this year, picking at 72, 64 and 88. Clementine’s too: picking on sizes two, three and four. “They were 10 days earlier than last year,” said Economou, adding that South Africa is strict about its imports regarding skin quality and brix. “They’re doing a very good job.”

Easy peelers easiest to sell
Summer is generally a more difficult time to sell oranges when summer fruits from California are in season, but Economou says the small easy peelers (clementines) are always marketable and he feels consumers tend to prefer them. “Easy peelers are much more marketable,” he says. Kids really enjoy them – plus parents like being able to have kids peel themselves, including his grandchildren. “If you give an orange to a child they can’t peel it, but they can peel an easy peeler. It’s small enough so you can consume the whole thing.”

Lucrative in lemons
South African lemons are continuing to be an increasing market. Economou says the acreage will grow 60% in the next 5 years. “The lemon market is becoming very lucrative price wise. The only thing that will affect the lemon market (in the US) is if Argentina comes in. But that doesn’t mean the world demand will lessen on lemons.” South Africa’s lemons will run until October/November. The only negative that will keep the South African export lemons in low volumes in the United States is the cold treatment requirements.

Increasing acreage

He also commented that the country is increasing or changing its citrus acreage. Acreage of easy peelers will grow 92 percent between 2017 and 2021. Lemons, oranges and grapefruit acreages are expected to grown with 60, 14.5 and 13.25 percent respectively within that same time frame.

There are more than crop issues that are affecting the amount of citrus grown in the US. Economou says real estate is also a big factor. “Florida is losing a lot of citrus to real estate. Keep in mind that’s also happening in California.” Arizona as well. Areas he says used to be heavily citrus-focused – including lemons (San Diego, Ervine, Ventura) are being built on. “Slowly the real estate is wining, fortunately or unfortunately for the growers.”

For more information:

Andy Economou
Tastyfrutti International, Inc.
Ph: 215-425-2777
aeconomou@tastyfrutti.com
www.tastyfrutti.com

Publication date: 6/28/2017
Author: Rebecca D Dumais