

Gold standard for mandarins

ClemenGold and Tango are leading the way for the category in South Africa as planted area and consumption remain on an upward curve

South Africa is on target for a bigger soft citrus export crop this campaign, with exciting prospects in particular in the late mandarin category. Branded variety ClemenGold is expected to lead the way, enjoying a production expansion both in the Cape's southern regions and in the area around Marble Hall in the north.

ClemenGold has proved to be a highly popular brand since it was launched onto the world's markets. The latest development is production being extended to Moosrivier, farm of the well-known Schoeman family near Marble Hall. "We are excited about Schoeman Farms joining the ClemenGold brand," says Abs van Rooyen, chairman of ANB Investments. "They add a unique category to our size specification and are fully committed to our brand."

ANB Investments has in recent years extended its production from the northern parts of the country to the Southern and Western Cape. At its farm Kruisrivier near Heidelberg, all production has been converted to ClemenGold, the latest being 16 hectares under wind nets which will increase pack-outs and enhance tree productivity. A similar development is taking place at the historical wine estate, Zandvliet, near Ashton in the Cape.

Meanwhile the 'new kid on the block', Tango, is also expected to make waves this season. While the majority of supply in 2016 was from the Kirkwood area in the Eastern Cape, 2017 brings the first production from Limpopo Province as well as the Western Cape. Widespread production in the main Citrus growing provinces has this year extended the Tango season from the end of May through to, potentially, mid-August.

Tango's Plant Breeders Rights were granted in South Africa in March 2016, which means that the registrar of varieties in South Africa has confirmed that Tango is not a replicant variety of something else and is registered as an individual variety in its own right. However, the challenge between the variety owners of Tango and Nadorcott is still ongoing.

It seems as if growers in South Africa are taking to Tango. "There has been further investments in planting taking the total hectares planted in South Africa to approximately 1,400 hectares, with more plantings planned for later this year," says AMC's Pieter de Jongh. "A total of 3,000ha have been licensed in South Africa to date, which will all be planted by 2020/2021."

AMC says there is indeed a steep rise in late mandarin production, while consumption of good late mandarin varieties is also rising. "To date the offer of high-quality late mandarins has been very limited to consumers if considered over a 12-month period. That will change in the near future as global production of late mandarin varieties is growing," De Jongh explains.

The success of ClemenGold is already being extended to other concepts under the 'gold brand family'.

"There are additional developments taking place within the gold brand family where the success story of ClemenGold is being rolled out to other products, such as the LemonGold, HoneyGold and NavelGold. We call it the golden selection of quality fruit where the taste and consumption attributes are guaranteed," Marius du Plessis, ClemenGold CEO, adds. "Joining the ClemenGold way also promises excellence in marketing innovation."