

US: Third vessel with South African citrus begins unloading

The third shipment of citrus from South Africa has just been discharged, a month after the first shipment arrived for the season on the East Coast. Many of the arrivals come via the port of Philadelphia, but others arrive at other points along the East Coast as well as Houston.

"Another vessel of citrus from South Africa started discharging on July 16," said Suhanra Conradie of Summer Citrus of South Africa. "This is the third after the Green Chile began discharging June 18th and a second conventional vessel discharged on July 2nd. We normally ship 9 or 10 conventional vessels, with additional containers to the East Coast and Houston. The dedicated conventional vessels form an imperative part of this successful program and account for almost 80 percent of the shipment. Fruit will be distributed primarily to the east coast and central regions, with a focus primarily on the east."



Crop update

The South African citrus season is around half way through now, with shipments set to continue for a couple of more months. Conradie reported that the Navel crop is more than 60 percent done, while later season Easy Peelers are set to begin arriving from the middle of August. Meanwhile, the growth in the Mandarin category means we can expect to see more of this fruit from South Africa over the coming years.

"All growers are finished with Clementines and will soon start with later Mandarin varieties," she said. "Limited volumes will start to arrive towards middle of August, followed by more decent volumes towards end of August into early September. The feedback from the production area is that the quality is exceptionally good, with very good color and internals. This is of course the area where the growth is predicted and over the next two to three years more Mandarins from South Africa will be available."

Other varieties include the Cara-Cara, which has a limited availability. Small volumes have been arriving since the first vessel, and are expected to be shipped with all subsequent vessels until the middle of August. One variety which growers say is seeing good growth is the Star Ruby. "Star Ruby has shown solid growth over the last few years and will continue to grow during the 2018 season," Conradie noted. "Star Ruby is loaded mainly into containers and started arriving from the end of June. Quality is good and they will run through end of September."



Drought conditions broken with decent rains

The Western Cape region in South Africa suffered from a widely-publicized drought earlier this year, threatening Cape Town with the possibility of running out of water. The good news is that the region has had a good amount of rain in the last few weeks. According to Conradie, this has alleviated the drought and growers are expecting a good crop for the remainder of the season.

"Looking back at how concerned we started the season and reviewing the position we are in now, we have been truly blessed!" she said. "The wording 'day zero' became a reality, as earlier in 2018 it was predicted that Cape Town could be one of the first major cities in the world to actually run out of running tap water. Thankfully, solid winter rains have arrived and Cape Town's drought has been broken. For now, the city appears safe from Day Zero through 2019."

"From the production side, growers are very thankful as dam levels have increased even more over the last weeks and we even had good snowfall on the mountains," she concluded. "In South Africa, we experience a typical Mediterranean climate, with moderate warmer and drier summers along with cooler winters. Currently it is the main rainfall season and we do have occasional snow on the mountains. South Africa provides the perfect conditions for growing the world's finest summer citrus."

For more information:

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