ClemenGold provides traction to take new brands along, like the NavelGold, HoneyGold and LemonGold

ClemenGold establishing a market pull for its mandarins

"What you want is a pull from the market, you want people to ask for your brand, and that's where we're positioning ourselves," Charles Rossouw, selected supplier of the ClemenGold brand in the Loskop Valley of Limpopo Province explains. "As a farmer I thought if I planted Nadorcotts it would facilitate the marketing of all my citrus, but about three or four years ago I ended up with the most beautiful mandarins and they were marketed in a strong market but I didn't have a game plan."

He decided to do what he'd initially declined some years ago: he aligned with the ClemenGold platform. "There's no grouping on mandarins in South Africa that operates at their level and others are just starting to catch up. When there were still low volumes of soft citrus, anyone could market it, but now we're standing at around 16 million export cartons of soft citrus, expected to double to 30 million cartons. By the time these large volumes hit the market, we'll have positioned ourselves as an exclusive product which pulls customers."

Mandarins being packed for both the ClemenGold and Sweet C brands in the packhouse of Roslé Boerdery, Limpopo

The ClemenGold brand is managed by the ANB Investments Group which offers products and services along the complete value chain of citrus, including production and packaging by Indigo Fruit Farming, plant material through its Du Roi and Cederberg Tree Nurseries, and cultivar development and management by Citrogold and Biogold.

Rossouw goes on to say that the advantage offered by aligning with ClemenGold does not, in his opinion, lie in price but rather in the rate of sales and movement of volumes, creating a market pull, as well as focused market development. At a time when few fruit categories are showing growth, summer citrus sales in the Northern Hemisphere rise year-on-year, he adds.

Currently there are a good number of growers with blocks of Nadorcott in South Africa, some with only a handful of hectares. Domestically grown volumes are sold by around 50 exporters of which ANB-Produce & Marketing (ANB-PM) is the only one offering the ClemenGold brand.

ClemenGold mandarins are mostly but not exclusively Nadorcotts: in order to ensure year-round supply, Royal Honey Murcott (RHM) mandarins which conform to specifications (and fortuitously ripen two to four weeks earlier) are currently trialled for their ability to lengthen ClemenGold availability.

Nadorcotts not conforming to ClemenGold specifications are marketed as Sweet C mandarins, which have become a ubiquitous brand of soft citrus in South Africa and abroad. In some overseas markets like Russia and Bangladesh this line has become a premium brand in its own right. With the help of RSA market agency, Sweet C mandarins are taken throughout southern Africa, a region where there is big potential for the category.

The ClemenGold mandarin has introduced Chinese customers to the idea that a mandarin can be easy to peel as well as virtually seedless, an appreciation that has really taken off since last year, and demand for ClemenGold in China has grown by leaps and bounds.

Nadorcotts packed in Naranja packhouse, Burgersfort

Non-traditional packaging formats in the quest for differentiation

Differentiation within a sea of soft citrus lies at the heart of the brand and to that effect, the fruit is packed in a range of non-traditional formats like 2kg, 7kg and 10kg cartons. Sourcing the right cartons and machinery for each format is a process that has taken them five years. “It’s a lot more effort to pack a 2kg carton but if the client expects it and it will distinguish you from the next guy who can’t do it, then you have to do it,” explains Josef Malan, general manager of the Naranja packhouse in Burgersfort where Nadorcotts are packed in over 20 different formats (and currently the only citrus packhouse in the country running Maf Roda’s Insight system that measures the brix and acid of every individual fruit). “If you want to build the brand, you don’t have a choice.”

“It’s the Nadorcott season now and without a good strategy and programmed business, a grower can be in for a tough time,” says Piet Pretorius, responsible for local marketing at ANB-PM. “The advantage of ClemenGold and Sweet C for the retailer is that from early until late in the season, you get the same quality fruit. We start up in Letsitele in week 23 and last year we were able to keep supplying Woolworths up to week 44. We’ve developed a very good storage programme and we expect to extend the supply window by a couple of weeks this year.”

In South Africa, ClemenGold has become a draw card for Woolworths, the top-end retailer, where ClemenGold displays are right at the entrance to the store, some stores even placing ClemenGold in the so-called aisle of temptation. Tastings have shown a sales conversion rate of 80%. During some weeks ClemenGold feature among Woolworths’ top five items in terms of turnover (although roasted chicken is almost never knocked off its top perch).

Hooking up other products to the successful Gold train

“The traction that the ClemenGold brand has gained over the past years enables us to take other fruit brands along, attracting partners with the same business ethos to share the golden opportunities increasingly available to us in, especially, the Far East, Africa and Europe,” says Marius du Plessis, CEO of ANB-PM, of their new HoneyGold and NavelGold lines. “After just one season, the Chinese are enamoured with the Orri and Honey Murcott varieties, marketed under the HoneyGold brand. They especially value the high sugar content (which explains the reference to honey) and the larger-sized fruit with its smooth skin and deep orange appearance.”

The HoneyGold brand

The NavelGold brand has been part of Edeka’s Premium Selection range for the past two seasons. As for their brand new LemonGold line of seedless lemons, they’re testing the markets through small volumes to Ireland and Germany due to currently limited supply. Early feedback has been very positive, indicating that consumers might be willing to pay a strong premium for the convenience of a lemon with no pips.

The ANB Investments Group will be at Asia Fruit Logistica, Hall 3 | Stand 3P09.

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