

Paul Hardman - Citrus Growers Association

South African citrus continues to build volumes to China

With the South African citrus season heading into its final quarter, Paul Hardman from the Citrus Growers Association explained that it has been a tough year for citrus exports.

“We have had logistics problems with the port strikes and a lower crop than we had expected with oranges. The total citrus estimate of 137m cartons (including Zimbabwe and Swaziland) has been revised to 127m cartons, some of this is due the biological process and there were quality issues due climatic conditions and some fruit didn’t reach export standards. Last year we had a bumper crop, so this was also a factor.”



The markets for South African citrus have mostly remained the same, but there has been a trend to ship more to China in recent years and this is continuing, Paul said that perhaps a bit too much was shipped in the wrong window there last year and they need to just build this market slowly in the future.

There have been a few interceptions of black spot into Europe again this year, but according to Paul it is something they are continuing to monitor, but he maintains that the fruit is not the pathway for the disease, and it will not be able to establish in Europe.

In general, South Africa is growing more easy peelers, “The trend is there but it is slowing, not quite what we have seen over the last five to ten years. It is still a smaller proportion of our main crop which is Valencias.”

Lemons volumes are also still growing quickly but plantings have slowed slightly now. “The prices have come down on the lemon market compared to the high of a few years ago but it is still an exciting product. We have a lot of new area of low

seeded and seedless varieties, there is the Eureka Seedless variety which is seedless.

“We have had drought conditions in the Eastern Cape for some time and it is still an ongoing concern, but the Western Cape has had fantastic rains which was great and the situation has normalised and a lot of the dams are storing water which will last 2-3 years.”

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