

SA citrus in demand as Europe craves vitamin C

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Careful timing and a delicate balancing act between reefer-box availability, internal and external logistical linkages, and successful throughput at all the relevant ports could see South African citrus capitalise on Europe's growing need for vitamin C.

But it's going to take consolidated efforts from South African cold-chain concerns, says Gert Upton of Schoonbee Landgoed in Limpopo.

According to the executive manager for marketing and sales at the estate in the Loskop Dam valley, "pressure is on the agricultural sector to ensure shops remain stocked with supplies both inside South Africa and abroad".

A major part of the appeal for citrus, he says, is its high concentration of vitamin C and the fact that it's peel-protected.

From an international perspective, however, there are coronavirus (Covid-19) challenges that require serious consideration.

“The northern hemisphere is experiencing a shortage of labour at border posts because of lockdowns. It means that markets can’t be properly serviced.”

As a result, Upton says, it has created a good opportunity for South African citrus exports.

“But we shouldn’t pack fruit in haste as fruit that isn’t really ready could be bad from a marketing point of view and could harm the country’s image.”

Looked at collectively, Upton believes acute consideration to ensure that all relevant requirements are met could unlock real returns for South African citrus as Europe ups the ante against Covid-19.

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