

Southern Hemisphere's citrus exports forecast up 12%

Citrus exports from the Southern Hemisphere this season have been forecast 12% higher year-on-year, driven by increased in lemons and soft citrus.

The recently established World Citrus Organization's preliminary estimate pegged exports from Argentina, Australia, Chile, Peru, South Africa, and Uruguay at 3.5m metric tons (MT) - despite a 3% dip in production to 8.4m MT - amid strong demand stemming from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Supplies for processing are forecast to fall by 15% to 2.4m MT, while volumes for the countries' respective domestic markets are set to decline by 6% to 2.5m MT.

Lemon exports are expected to see the biggest rise, with the WCO forecasting a 32% uptick to 905,000MT. The next biggest growth category is soft citrus, for which exports are set to grow by 14% to 823,000MT.

Production levels of both lemons and soft citrus are forecast to remain flat.

Grapefruit exports are also set to see an uptick, rising by the tune of 9% to 260,000MT, with production set to see a smaller rise.

Oranges - the largest category - are forecast to see the smallest export rise, with the WCO figures showing a 3% increase to 1.5m MT. Orange production, meanwhile, is expected to fall by 6%.

The WCO is working closely with Brazil and Bolivia to include their data as well into the forecast very shortly.

World Citrus Organization now fully operational

First announced at Spain's Fruit Attraction in October last year, the WCO says it is now fully operational with a complete agenda of activities for 2020.

"In July, a meeting of the membership will review the state of the industry and take stock of the latest consumer trends and producing countries' experiences in the midst of the coronavirus crisis," the group said.

"Indeed, in the past months, citrus has been highlighted as one of the most attractive fruit categories for consumers, given their health properties.

"Consequently, the issue of nutrition and promotion of citrus consumption will also be discussed with members in the upcoming meeting."