

COVID-19 pushes SA citrus exports to the US to new highs

By leandre van der Walt August 28, 2020 11:02 am



Over the past season, red grapefruit sales have increased 11% amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, according to Justin Chadwick, CEO of the Citrus Growers' Association of Southern Africa.

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The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in positive market demand for citrus, causing an upsurge in prices, according to Justin Chadwick, CEO of the Citrus Growers' Association of Southern Africa.

Chadwick and Hannes de Waal, managing director of the Sundays River Citrus Company, spoke during a recent webinar, organised by the !Xhariep branch of the Agricultural Writers South Africa, about the challenges the industry experienced amidst COVID-19 and the market's response.

The sale of navel oranges in the US increased significantly this year, said Chadwick.

"In March 2020, when the [COVID-19] situation was really bad in the US, sales increased 84% compared to the same time last year. Over the year, there has been a 29% increase in navel sales. It has been a massive positive for [South African citrus] in the US," said Chadwick.

He added that not only did volumes increase, but prices also increased over the season. The same scenario played out for red grapefruit and lemons, with sales increasing 11% and 17% respectively, he said.

This increase in demand was driven by the view that vitamin C was an immune booster.

"Interestingly, it was especially the Western markets that showed a big demand for vitamin C. In Asia it has not been as marked," according to Chadwick.

This industry was hopeful that this trend would continue post-COVID-19.

"I think this pandemic will be with us for another year or more. Therefore, I think there will still be a demand for citrus," said Chadwick.

De Waal agreed, saying that while the pandemic was continuing, the demand for citrus would continue. "Overall, I do not think that the trend will go away easily."

