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'No accurate yardstick for citrus volumes this year'

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Using the past to predict the future has been a useful yardstick for exporters – not least in the citrus industry.

But not in 2020, says Citrus Growers' Association CEO Justin Chadwick.

“Many of us love to look at figures, graphs and tables; we love analysing what happened in the past, using this to determine what will happen in the future. Be careful when doing that in 2020,” he says.

“Take grapefruit packing and shipping as an example. The season happened to be early, but exporters also saw the need to try and pack and ship as quickly as possible – the rationale being to get as much as possible into the markets due to their relative emptiness, and due to the fact that there could be a shortage of workers later in the season (as the pandemic strengthened).”

According to Chadwick, those watching the grapefruit loadings may have assumed that this indicated a high volume season. Figures for this week, however, show grapefruit

packing is now below both 2018 and 2019. Almost 80% of the season’s grapefruit are now in cartons.

“The delay in vessels will mean some bunching in the markets – and this does not necessarily mean more fruit. Shipping will not follow the pattern of previous years. So be careful when applying previous years’ trends to what is happening in 2020.”

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