

Sila Louw with Oppy in South Africa

“Our strength is to sell produce from Africa directly to North American retailers”

Oppy recently opened an office in South Africa and discusses the journey of setting foot on the African continent, combined with the immense opportunities the country offers.

Having representation in South Africa had been on Oppy's radar for several years and about five years ago, the company started exploring opportunities. “This fact-finding mission revealed the vast potential in quality, growing volumes and investments in new varieties,” says Sila Louw, responsible for grower relations with Oppy in South Africa. “Like most things in life, timing is crucial, and the office was officially opened in December 2020.”

First export program started in 2016

However, long before then the company had started to build relationships in the country. “Partnerships already started back in 2013 when Total Produce acquired a stake in Oppy,” Louw commented. Since many South African exporters were familiar with Total Produce EU and UK, synergies started presenting themselves. For South African exporters, it was a good fit to add the US and Canada to their baskets. “As a result, we exported Oppy's first South African citrus to the US in 2016, followed by pip fruit to Canada. The first few seasons we developed and nurtured these relationships, building an incredibly strong bond based on transparency and trust,” he shared. When Total Produce acquired a 45 percent shareholding in Dole in 2018, Oppy and Dole South Africa started exploring opportunities together.



Pictured top right: Sila Louw.

Product expansion

Currently, Oppy markets South African hard citrus such as navels, grapefruit, lemons, and easy peelers. In addition, green, red, and black seedless grapes are part of the product offering. “The options and opportunities from Africa seem endless and given that retailer shelves can never be empty, we are looking into expanding our product range.” In the near future, Oppy’s goal is to be able to offer kiwifruit, apples, pears, stone fruit, berries, pomegranates, avocados, and ginger as well. About 95 percent of all African sourced product is sold directly to US and Canadian retailers.

In addition to South Africa, Oppy also has established relationships in Namibia, Zimbabwe, Egypt, and Morocco. “These countries are a perfect complement to our offerings from South Africa and support us to deliver on our ‘Expect the world from us’ promise,” Louw concluded.



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