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Positive outlook for Southern Hemisphere citrus

WCO presents forecasts at AGM and announces creation of new health and nutrition working group

The 2021 Southern Hemisphere citrus crop is expected to weigh in at 22.7m tonnes, an increase of 3.18 per cent on last year. Exports are forecast to grow by 12.72 per cent to 3.8m tonnes.

The figures were released by the World Citrus Organisation (WCO), which last week held its first annual general meeting since its official creation in 2020.

The forecast is collected from member industry associations in Argentina, Australia, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Peru, South Africa and Uruguay.

Presenting the data, Philippe Binard, Secretary General of the WCO said: "following the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, a positive trend of consumers' demand for fruit and vegetables was noted, in particular for citrus, widely recognised for its high nutritional value, notably in terms of vitamin C content. The large volume available is positive news as it will meet the increased demand".

By category, soft citrus showed the greatest increase, with production up 10.57 per cent and exports expected to rise by more than 20 per cent to 1m tonnes. Orange production remains broadly stable, rising by 1.93 per cent, while lemons and grapefruit are forecast to rise by 2.37 per cent and 6.44 per cent respectively.

Exports are expected to increase across all varieties, with oranges up 11.55 per cent, lemons 7.20 per cent and grapefruit 9.56 per cent.

On the processing side, a total of 13.4m tonnes of citrus are expected to go to the juice market, up 1.26 per cent on the previous year. It is, however, worth noting that Brazil's data is preliminary, with official forecasts being provided in the coming weeks.

Eric Imbert of CIRAD and Technical Secretariat of WCO said: "Southern Hemisphere citrus exports continue to grow, in particular for lemons and easy peelers. The Southern Hemisphere today represents 27 per cent of the global citrus market."

During the meeting, WCO co-chairs Jose Antonio Garcia of Ailimpo and Justin Chadwick of the South African Citrus Growers Association said the full first year of operation had "allowed the organisation to quickly build a representative association and provide the benefits and value to the members".

The WCO also announced plans to set up a formal working group on health and nutrition. Natalia Santos, the organisation's deputy secretary general, said the aim was to "enable better knowledge-exchange among members on citrus nutritional assets and contribute towards a better understanding of its health attributes".

The first meeting of WCO's Health & Nutrition focus group will take place in the second semester of 2021.

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