

South African Tango mandarin harvest gets underway

Another challenging citrus season has started with the southern hemisphere already filling up some of the retail channels with grapefruit, satsumas, clementine's and even the first lemons. The northern hemisphere citrus season will come to an end in the next two months as Spanish Verna lemons and late oranges from Morocco, Spain and Egypt are harvested, creating some overlap in supply.



As we enter the second year of the Covid pandemic, strongly affecting the world's health and economy, the fresh produce production and logistics, remains again a difficult equation to manage. Consumption patterns and distribution channels have changed markedly; supermarkets have increased sales as consumers have more limited options to purchase fresh produce, while continued lockdowns have badly damaged the hospitality sector. Logistics have also been affected by a shortage of containers and changing shipping schedules. However, citrus remains a highly sought-after product on the supermarket shelves due to its inherent health benefits.



“As Europe starts softening again its anti-Covid measures before the start of the summer vacations, the Horeca sector is slowly starting to re-open. But It is still not clear where the tourists will spend their holidays this year,” comments Andres Ribas van Oosterom (MD of FruitOne Europe). “We expect that people will not fly that much this summer, probably remaining closer to home until the vaccination rates have increased,” he adds.



FruitOne, a large citrus grower-exporter from South Africa, has finished exporting its early lemon crop and is now busy packing grapefruit to its world markets, and will soon start harvesting its first Tango premium mandarins.

“Our first Tangos will be picked in week 20 at our farms in Letsitele and Hoedspruit. Thanks to cooler nights the colour development has speeded up nicely. We have followed production best-practise on our 450 hectares of Tango and maintain exceptional packing standards. This, together with proved low residues to meet the most rigorous retail demand, have allowed the group’s distribution lines to increase into retail channels around the world, helping to cover the growing demand for good citrus.

It is also clear that the consumers have learned to identify the Tango mandarin variety by its distinctive colour, absolute lack of seeds, great taste & flavour, easy peeling and good-long shelf life. The trend is now evident: consumers more frequently purchase and consume this specific premium variety above other mandarins and navels, and it has even started to eat into the consumption of some other products,” remarks Andres Ribas.



“Around week 26, FruitOne will start harvesting the first early Valencia oranges, which are also starting to show some colour development and well-advanced internals. It will remain a challenging year, but we strongly believe that, thanks to great service levels and helped by a solid and recognized brand, FruitOne will be able to safely sail through these difficult waters again, efficiently bring our best products to the consumer table on time,” concludes Andres Ribas.

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