

Sweet season for grapefruit exporters

09 Nov 2021



Grapefruit exporters have a lot to celebrate this year, with volumes packed for export - at 15.9 million cartons (17 kilogram equivalents) - almost 16% up on last year's 13.7 million cartons.

This, according to the Citrus Growers' Association, was due to the recovery from the dry conditions experienced in the northern areas last year.

The estimate, prepared in mid-March, also anticipated the crop would be similar to the 2018/2019 season. The estimated volumes for 2021 include volumes available for processing (PP grade or Class 3).

The final volume packed came to 15.5million cartons.

The Grapefruit Focus Group was almost spot on with its forecast with their figure just 3% below the initial estimate.

The biggest producer, Letsitele, at 4.4 million cartons, was 12% under the estimate. Hoedspruit at 3.9 m cartons was 1% under, while Onderberg, at 2.5m, was 2% over. Limpopo River with 1.3m cartons was 8% below the estimate, while

Oranje Rivier (1.3 m) was the closest, recording just 4 000 cartons under.

EU remains the largest market for southern African grapefruit – importing some 85 000 tonnes. China imports have increased from 50 000 tonnes in 2020, to 76 000 this year – largely attributed to the higher percentage of PP grade fruit exported to China. Japan imports also increased from 25 000 tonnes to 28 000 tonnes, just ahead of Russia (19 000 tonnes in 2021). UK (10 000 tonnes) rounds up the top five importing markets.

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