## Dr Pieter Scholtz - Blydevallei

# High packouts expected on early Valencias and mandarins

With the early lemon and grapefruit campaigns already behind them, Blydevallei in Hoedspruit, Limpopo, now focuses on their early Valencias and soft citrus.

*The Valencia season has newly kicked off (photos supplied by Blydevallei)*

“The Valencia season is in its infancy, but so far the quality and fruit size look really good. We expect a crop peaking on counts 64/72 and high packouts,” says Dr Pieter Scholtz, veterinarian turned fruit farmer and owner of Blydevallei. “We’ve already started with our mandarins, we’re currently busy with our Royal Honey

Murcotts and when they're done, we'll switch over to the Nadorcotts by week 24. The mandarins are also looking good this season with vivid colour and high sugars."

The Hoedspruit company produces a million cartons of citrus per year, grown on 700ha of citrus (grapefruit, soft citrus, lemons and Valencias), as well as 5,000 tonnes of mangoes, much of it packed into its widely recognised Canyon Gold brand.

"Over the past fifteen years most of our citrus exports are done in our own Canyon Gold brand and in many markets it has already become a very popular brand. On mangoes, the Canyon Gold brand is mostly used for the local market," adds Charlene Leicester, marketing manager at Blydevallei.


"When it comes to citrus we're as a producer fully integrated in the cost chain, so we produce citrus, we pack our own fruit and that of outside producers, and handle the fruit ourselves along the logistics chain to the end consumer," he says. "We do make use of exporters to specific markets or clients, but we also handle our own exports to, among others, Europe and China."

The closure of Chinese ports due to lockdown, as well as the war in Ukraine, have resulted in an exceptionally difficult grapefruit campaign this year. Blydevallei produces around 300,000 15kg cartons of class 1 grapefruit in a season.

"Unfortunately because we're so early on our lemons, most of the EU retail programmes haven't yet switched over and so most of our lemons go to receivers in the Middle East and Russia. Currently the European lemon market is fantastic."

The late rains fortunately came after their lemons were picked.

*From left to right: Blydevallei's Thabiso Ndlovu, Jabulani Mathebula and Samuel Morema*

**Blydevallei is synonymous with mangoes**

Mangoes are their pride and Blydevallei has invested much into mango research and development, both into cultivar trials and into mango drying technology.

"Westfalia's Shelly cultivar is showing growth in the market and the marketing done to support the cultivar has been brilliant," Dr Scholtz notes. "The mango has an amazing taste and sweetness and moreover, it has a longer shelf life than other cultivars."

They have 200ha of mango and their greatest volumes are of Keitt, a large and versatile mango both for fresh and drying.

The local mango market is expanding steadily but for the moment there is relatively little expansion in mango orchards.

The company introduced 1kg poly bags for their Rosa mangoes which don't fit into a carton (its average size is much smaller than other cultivars which are usually packed into 4kg cartons). The reaction to the bags was very favourable on the municipal markets where they tested it, leading to their decision to roll it out to their other retail markets and a few local buyers.

*The Blydevallei team*

**Mango drying a profitable alternative to mango exports**

Their mango component works a bit differently: fruit for export and specific value-added programmes is packed at BBI, while those for the municipal markets are packed at Canyon Pakkers, their own mango packhouse.

Westfalia Marketing, in which Blydevallei has been a shareholder since 2012 with the purchase of the Mariepskop estate, handles their mango exports.

"On exporting we're competing mostly with South American countries with a very favourable climate for mango production. Countries like Peru and Brazil produce mangos with very good colour, very popular in Europe. The world's largest mango producer in Mexico focuses on the US market. In general South African mango exports fare better in the Middle East which is relatively close, while we also export a fair amount to Hong Kong."

**Mango exports could well decline**

Exports were complicated by a lack of container availability, a problem not easily managed on a sensitive product like mangoes.

“The planning around exporting a containerful of mangoes takes a lot more time than citrus exports. Mangoes just can’t stand around waiting for containers to become available. Between the demand for fresh cut mangoes and the good prices we’re getting on dried product, means that in future we could well be exporting lower volumes.”

Mango drying has proven to be an excellent outlet for mangoes and the dried product flies off the shelves, especially during the past season. The yield on early cultivars like Tommy Atkins and Shelly was down, which resulted in a significant shortage in mangoes delivered to drying facilities and stimulated demand.

“South Africa has for sure become greater competition to West Africa on dried mango and I think in time we’ll have a strong foot in the market with our dried product,” Dr Scholtz maintains. “South African fruit is of the best quality, in my opinion, and of course it fulfills certain standards before it’s sent to a client. Thus our clients are guaranteed of constant high quality, which is what a client wants.”

**Ambitious fruit development in Botswana**

Blydevallei is the majority shareholder of the Selebi Phikwe Citrus Project (https://sphikwecitrus.com) in northeastern Botswana.

*Young citrus orchards in northeastern Botswana, developed by Blydevallei and partners*

During the first phase 900ha of citrus will be established by December 2022 (710ha is already in the ground) with the end goal of 1,200ha of a full portfolio of citrus: lemons, grapefruit, navels and Valencias and premium mandarins.

At Selebi Phikwe trials on avocados, mangoes, bananas and other commodities have also recently been established; the project sets itself the goal of stimulating the development of a fruit industry in the Southern African country much better known for its meat production.

*A total of 1,200ha of a variety of citrus is planned at the Selebi Phikwe citrus project*

For more information:
Charlene Leicester
**Blydevallei**
Tel: +27 15 795 5087
Email: charlene@blydevallei.co.za
https://blydevallei.co.za/ (https://blydevallei.co.za/)

Publication date: Thu 9 Jun 2022
Author: Carolize Jansen