



Josef Malan – ANB Twypack Citrus packhouse finds golden mean between human and machine



A packhouse is a showcase. It is often the place where international buyers seal the deal, Josef Malan of the ANB Group says.

Within the group holding the ClemenGold license, there are six packhouses (two are joint ventures) of which Josef has overseen the construction at three: the Naranja packhouse in Burgersfort, BBI Packers in Hoedspruit and the enlargement of their Twypack packhouse in Nelspruit.

When the ANB Group bought the new but still small Twypack citrus packhouse in the Mpumalanga Lowveld, they knew they needed to expand its throughput to 40 tonnes of soft citrus an hour, operating 24 hours a day..

TOMRA equipment came with the acquisition of the packhouse, so it made sense to install a TOMRA 14-lane sizer of two independent lines (Mafroda lines run in their other packhouses).



South African-manufactured automation systems

Automation tops up



"We needed to find a balance to make it manageable between the number of tonnages we needed to pack and the amount of people that can be managed. During a shift there are still 200 to 250 people working in the packhouse, but even with so many people you can't pack 40 tonnes an hour. You need to top it up with automation."

Right: an unmanned shuttle car moving pallets around

All of the automation employed in the packhouse was built by Cape Town-based Gossamer: inline automatic packing machines, automatic accumulation areas, automatic palletizers with unmanned shuttle cars.

"I love packhouse design and to see how it's done in the rest of the world, and to adapt it to local conditions. I like that," Josef remarks. "We incorporated a lot of

technology that you don't see in other packhouses."

At this packhouse, more than 90% of the equipment in the packhouse was manufactured in South Africa. "With this project that was an important goal," he remarks.



They finished packing soft citrus in September, which leaves them with around six months in which Lowveld lemons (December to February) and perhaps even kiwifruit would fit in well.

Growing demand for soft citrus from Africa

Soft citrus did well in Europe this season, but growers in citrus black spot areas need more options.



"There's a big focus outside of the EU: China, the Middle East (where soft citrus also did well), Russia, Canada, India, Bangladesh - many of these markets weren't even available ten years ago. I remember when we sent our first ClemenGold Nadorcotts to China in 2008: it was one container. The next year, it

was around twenty containers. Thereafter it just exploded and now we do much more in a week than 20 containers.”

And even so, China’s full soft citrus potential has not been explored, while they’ve merely scratched the surface of what could be done in India.



Also, he points out, there is a growing demand and a lot of potential for soft citrus in Africa (specifically South Africa’s neighbouring countries). Like South Africans, he says, they like large fruit; counts which Europe and others don’t take.

Right: Josef Malan, general manager of Twypack packhouse in Nelspruit, Mpumalanga

“This year was definitely better than the last two years with freight costs coming down and overall prices were slightly better. It had been such a difficult past two years that we’re now in a recovery phase.”

NH imports to complement South African season

The ANB Group will start importing Nadorcotts from Morocco and Spain for the Woolworths Clemengold programme towards the end of November.

Another cultivar to which they hold the license is the Leanri, a young variety, which, along with Royal Honey Murcott, are making a name for themselves in the UK, Europe and China because it fits into a window when there are few mandarins on the market.



"A packhouse is a showcase"

"Our volumes are still growing, but I think what's going to happen now is a larger focus on timelines, on areas when there is little fruit on the international markets, the early and late periods which are not being properly serviced currently. South Africa's quality stands out. We're just getting better at what we do."

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