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Citrus yields seesaw between China and Europe

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Source: Tomra

Compared to last season, South Africa's citrus export volumes to China decreased significantly but the slack was taken up by increased demand from Europe.

That's according to Neil Wan from TopSun Fresh, an importer of citrus into China.

On a recent visit to South Africa he explained that volumes to Europe have increased dramatically compared to the previous year, with stronger prices.

However, the Chinese market struggled with grapefruit prices and movements, most notably in retail markets.

"For navel oranges, the market is paying higher prices for premium label citrus, including Witkrans and Cambria," Wan said.

Valencia oranges have had stable pricing of 140 to 180 yuan, depending on variety and colour.

Compared to the last season, export volumes of oranges to China have decreased by 40%, driven by the slight decrease in production in South Africa.

The main reason for the decrease is that Europe has been a very strong buyer from the start of the season.

“We observe that volumes to Europe have increased by approximately 50% year-to-date, a very different picture from last year.

“This year, due to late-season rain, more orchards suffered from citrus black spots. As a result, late-season volumes are likely to go to the Middle East and parts of Asia”

Wan added that mandarin prices have been struggling since the start of the season. Volumes to China have increased 30% year-on-year, and prices have come down.

Recent natural disasters in northern China have affected consumer spending, but the overall consumption of imported citrus is trending upwards.

Supermarkets are still paying premium prices for quality products.

Given the consumer spending environment, fruit quality is the only perceived headwind.

Products showing new varieties and trendy packaging tend to perform better, Wan said.

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