

"The 2024 citrus season hasn't gone badly so far in the Sunday's River Valley"

The 2024 citrus season for Atmar Citrus is going well despite some rain. The farming operations of André Serfontein and his family is based in Dunbrody, Kirkwood, in the Sunday's River Valley of the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. "The 2024 season hasn't gone badly so far. We achieve our goals with the estimates our team has made. However, the disease pressure is challenging with the lemons due to Benomyl no longer being used," states Serfontein.



André Serfontein, from Atmar Citrus.

Many growing areas in South Africa have struggled with fruit sizing. Estimates for lemons and oranges were recently lowered by the respective committees of the Citrus Growers Association of Southern Africa. Atmar Citrus had a plan for this with careful orchard management practices, explains Andries du Preez, Director

of Twente Partners: "We practice very good pruning practices, so our fruit's size and quality look quite good. We do everything we can to get the size right - we focus on pruning, thinning of fruit, and the sprays."

He says no two farms have the same growing conditions, even in the same growing region. "There is no uniformity, every farmer's circumstances are different, but the bigger picture is that the picking in the valley is up-to-date and everything is going according to plan."



The Sundays River Valley had some rain, but were spared the heavy rain that growers in the Western Cape had this winter. If anything, the rain was good to increase the sizing of the fruit, says Serfontein. "We did not have abnormal weather conditions that negatively affected us. We lost picking days with the rain, but it helped with the fruit size, especially on late varieties. We only had bad weather conditions for one week when the port in Port Elizabeth was closed."

Atmar Citrus has a rich history and legacy in Kirkwood with the late At Serfontein starting the citrus farming business in the early 1900s. This was followed by his son Jannie, who in turn passed on the business to his sons André and Merwe, who have expanded it substantially.

Atmar Citrus is currently busy harvesting the late navels, Valencia's with Star Ruby's next on their list to be harvested. They sum up the season and markets as follows, with feedback from Twente Partners.

Oranges

"Oranges are having a good year due to the very good prices for juice fruit from local processors. Europe did not have strong demand for early Navels due to the presence of Egyptian Valencia's, but there is now good demand for South African Valencia's and we are seeing much lower shipments so far compared to the previous year. Most of the South African Navels were focused on the Middle East."

"For Cambria's, there is good demand from the Far East and Middle East, with good prices. Canada's prices are stable and good demand especially for greater scores of fruit of 48-56 of which there is less available in the Eastern Cape this season."

Soft citrus

"The Satsuma and Clementine season was difficult due to quality problems from the Eastern Cape. Novas experienced a good season, with Canada in particular performing well. Nadorcott and Tango are also having a good season, and it looks like the season is going to end earlier than expected, resulting in a positive price trend."



André Serfontein concludes by providing some wisdom and perspective regarding the high orange juice prices this season. "The input cost is approximately R180 000/ha, which makes it challenging – i.e. a high juice price is not necessarily an outlier. The costs remain high, so the balance has to be right with what is coming in and what's going out."

For more information:

Andries du Preez

Atmar Citrus

(+27) 42 230 0347

atmar@srvalley.co.za

www.atmarcitrus.com (<http://www.atmarcitrus.com/our-history/>)

Publication date: Wed 7 Aug 2024

Author: Clayton Swart

© FreshPlaza.com

•

