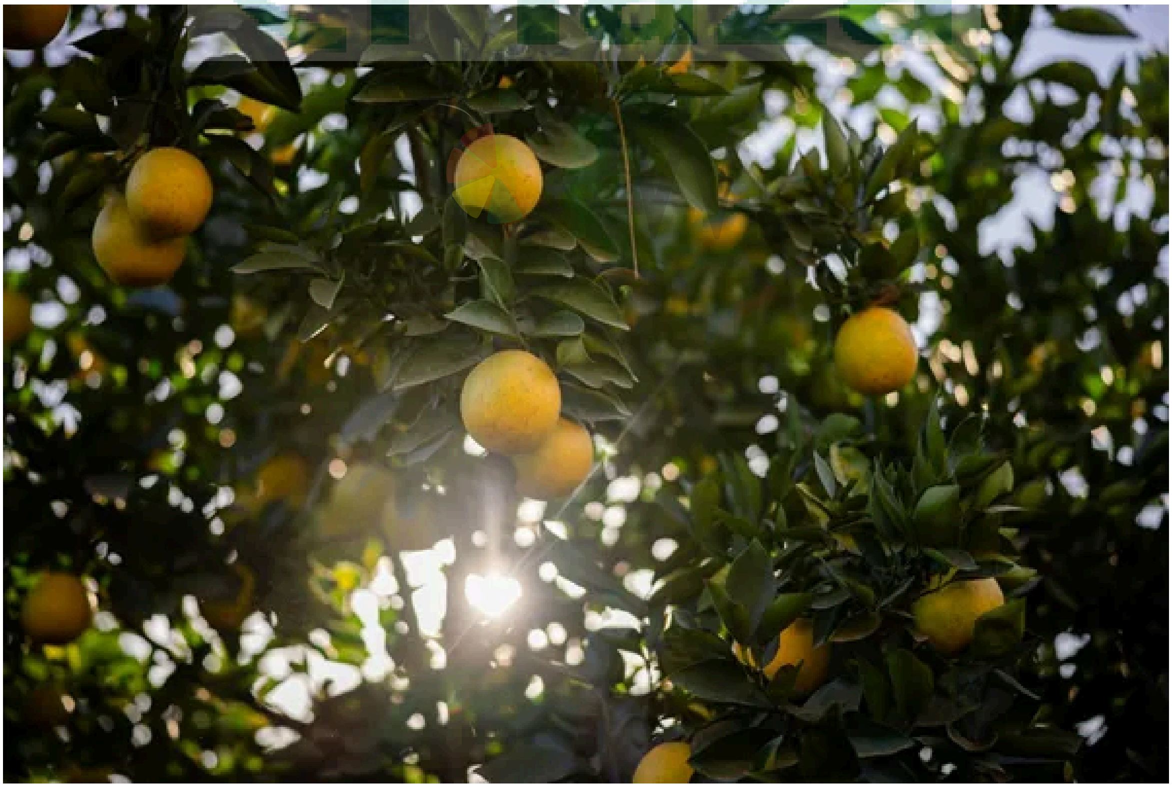
Edwin Wolf, Origin Fruit Group

# "Prices for juice oranges on local South African market higher than we are willing to pay in Europe"

The market for early South African citrus is not too keen yet, observes Edwin Wolf of Rotterdam-based Origin Fruit Group. "Meanwhile, supply is starting to pick up more, after South Africa was in delay mode for a long time. We saw this especially with lemons, where large volumes were still in stock from Spain. But now there is more movement."

He does see that the opposite is true in the grapefruit market. "There, the supply at the beginning of the season actually started smoothly with strong volumes, but that market is now going down and that supply is now also ending earlier. Sales of early mandarins are moderate as well."

"The season started with Satsumas of moderate quality, and there is also very little demand for the Clementine-like varieties. Demand is more focused on strong varieties such as Nova and Leanri and some customers are already asking for Nadorcott, but they are still hardly available."



The supply of South African oranges to Europe is also behind significantly. "There have been as much as 50% fewer shipments to Europe so far than last year and that was not a great year either," Edwin observes. "South African growers have anticipated the large volumes from Egypt, but above all, they have little need to export because of the high juice prices paid on the local market. These are currently at a higher level than we can pay in Europe."

"Normally, Brazil is the biggest supplier for the juice industry, but they have a crop failure, so that demand is now being met by Egypt and South Africa. Our expectation is that these industry shortages could continue for another two years. Currently, there are still supplies of Egyptian oranges in Europe, but they are largely covered by the programmes."

"So for South Africa, there is definitely room to send serious volumes. Prices for the Navels from South Africa are between 15-17 euros and the Valencia's are going towards 18-19 euros, so that is still more than double what we are still getting from Egypt," Edwin continued. "Only the weather in Europe is not cooperating so well yet. First rain caused low demand and now the heat would limit sales again. Fortunately, there are always exceptions. For instance, lime prices have shot up again."

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Publication date: Wed 26 Jun 2024