

South Africa Safresco expands citrus and avocado operations

Safresco, a Southern Hemisphere fruit producer, grows, packs, sources, and markets citrus, grapes, and avocados, with citrus as its main product. The company operates with 1,300 hectares (ha) of citrus and two packing facilities in South Africa, 600 ha of citrus, 500 ha of grapes, and 500 ha of avocados in Peru, and a sourcing team in Argentina. Annual sales exceed 180,000 tonnes, mainly to Europe and the United States. Safresco is also part of Citri&Co, a European-based group with sales of around one million tonnes per year and operations in Spain, France, Morocco, Brazil, South Africa, Peru, and the UK.

Managing director Juan Greyvenstein noted that South African growers are currently in a profitable period for most citrus varieties. He highlighted the sector's exposure to multiple influences and uncertainties that affect strategic and operational decisions.

The company operates a vertically integrated model covering research, production, packing, sourcing, exporting, and customer relations. This allows control of quality through all stages of the process, supported by its own orchards and packing facilities. Investment has been reinvested into expansion, supported by growing partners who supply fruit for packing and marketing.

Safresco recently acquired a stake in the first commercial citrus project in Botswana. The operation includes 1,000 ha of citrus and a packing facility, with plans to expand to 2,200 ha over the next two years. Botswana offers favourable growing conditions, lower pest pressure, and suitable soils. This complements existing South African production by extending varietal timing and market access.

To meet increasing demand, Safresco is expanding supply through rented orchards, partnerships with growers, and investment in netting to improve yields and quality. The company is also diversifying supply in the Western Cape and northern South Africa, with additional grapes and avocados sourced to complement production in Peru.

Sustainability measures include precise application of fertilisers through fertigation, soil improvement with compost, and pest control guided by scouting with support from natural insect populations. Irrigation is managed by monitoring soil moisture and weather conditions to avoid excess use.

Safresco also implements community projects in the Sundays River Valley. These include support for home-based caregivers in collaboration with the Sisters of Mercy, the Kirkwood Bulk Water project, which provides over 400 water tanks for employees and local households, and an employee trust established in 2018 that holds minority ownership stakes in company assets.

Greyvenstein stated, "These projects reflect our long-term commitment to improving the quality of life and supporting sustainable development in the areas where we operate."

Source: Food & Beverage Outlook (<https://www.foodbeverage-outlook.com/agriculture-farming/safresco-unpeeling-the-flavours-of-success>)

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