

South African oranges are eagerly awaited in the Middle East market

The scarcity of oranges is affecting the Middle East market, following major supply disruptions from Spain and Egypt. According to Kashif Shahzad, head of procurement at Global Star Group, the arrival of early South African oranges is highly anticipated this year.



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The importer reports, "The 2025 year is an odd period for the Middle Eastern citrus market, with several factors leading to a citrus shortage. One of the main reasons is the reduced supply from Egypt, which has historically been a significant contributor to the region's citrus industry. This is due to the growing role of juice factories in Egypt, which altered the demand landscape, further impacting the market's trajectory. The decrease in Egyptian supply comes despite the competition in the latter part of the season becoming very positive for Egypt due to the uncertain situation of Spanish navels."

Kashif continues, "Usually, Spain continues to supply our market until week 20, but this year the season ended at week 14 due to the weather situation in Spain and poor quality for export. This unexpected shift allowed Egyptian navel and Valencia oranges to regain market strength by the end of their season, stabilizing demand and improving trade conditions."



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Usually, South African early oranges had difficulties entering the Middle East market, according to the importer. The situation is different this year. He explains, "In the past, we have had a fairly large volume of citrus fruit injected into the market, which has created a difficult situation for early South African oranges. We're already seeing the opposite trend as South African lemons have led the way with a strong start in 2025, setting a positive tone for the rest of the citrus season. Given the global trends surrounding citrus availability, we are optimistic that South African citrus, and particularly oranges, will enjoy a stable and prosperous year."

"This scenario marks a significant turning point for the industry, one that has not occurred in several years. The reasons are diverse: the emergence of juice factories, climate change, and global logistical issues which add layers of uncertainty and could redefine citrus trade patterns in unforeseen ways. The fresh produce industry is becoming increasingly unpredictable, and we don't know what surprises the coming seasons will bring," Kashif adds.

"For now, the Saudi and by extension the Middle East markets are eagerly waiting for navel oranges from South Africa, and I'm expecting good returns on the early navels as well as later citrus varieties, unless we see an oversupply from South Africa itself," Kashif concludes.

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