Eosta launches overseas citrus season

"Latin American organic oranges join South African supply"

The overseas organic citrus season is now gearing up. Lemons, mandarins, and grapefruit are already en route, while the first South African oranges are expected to arrive in weeks 25-26. To bridge the gap, Eosta is offering Egyptian Valencia oranges. Despite the challenges associated with citrus imports, product managers Peke van Beek and Koen van Velthoven anticipate a strong season.

The organic farms that Eosta works with utilize their own compost, maintain cows for circular cultivation, and have natural soil vegetation to manage weeds

Estimated volumes for lemons and tangerines are expected to be slightly below last year's levels. Grapefruit volumes are projected to be nearly the same. However, orange volumes are forecasted to be around 20-30% lower than last season, particularly affecting the Navel variety. "We will particularly notice this with the Navel variety," Peke noted. Due to the anticipated shortages, Eosta has expanded its focus and will introduce Valencia oranges from Latin America for the first time, starting in mid-July.

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In recent years, South African organic citrus cultivation has increasingly adopted solar energy

This diversification has been in the works for some time. Peke explained, "For the past three years, we have had to comply with a mandatory cold treatment for South African oranges, which results in an additional 10-15% product loss each year. This was a major reason for exploring alternative source countries. Risk diversification is also an important factor." Eosta has long maintained a broader sourcing network for lemons, importing from Peru, Argentina, Chile, and the Dominican Republic in addition to South Africa.

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In organic lemon cultivation, the Eureka variety dominates

High demand and high prices expected

Nevertheless, South Africa remains the primary source for summer citrus. The main growing regions are in the Orange River, Western Cape, and Eastern Cape, as Koen explained. "In recent years, the Eastern Cape has increasingly struggled with Citrus Black Spot due to excessive rainfall. We can partially combat this with sound and natural preventive measures, but it is ultimately a natural product."

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Sustainable Sourcing Manager Gert-Jan Lieffering (r) on site.

From a marketing perspective, the outlook is promising, Koen continued. "Recent weather conditions in Spain are likely to cause problems for the late lemon varieties, which typically leads to higher demand for imported citrus and strong prices for growers at the start of the season. I expect a smooth transition in this regard. Grapefruit and mandarins are smaller categories in terms of volume." Given the expected shortages, relatively high weekly prices in the orange category are also anticipated, Peke agreed.

© Eosta B.V.Germany is the largest market for organic citrus, with the strongest growth currently seen in Central Europe, according to the product managers Koen van Velthoven and Peke van Beek.

Orange market benefits from juice trend

Overall, organic sales appear to be recovering. "We saw a noticeable dip in 2022-2023 due to inflation and rising prices, with organic demand—especially in Germany and Austria—partly shifting to mainstream discounters. While price sensitivity among consumers remains, it is significantly lower than 2-3 years ago. As a result, natural food is gaining popularity again in Germany."

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A juicer in a German supermarket with Demeter oranges from Eosta

Citrus has long been one of the largest fruit categories. Despite this, organic citrus still accounts for a relatively small share—just 3.3% of the global citrus area was organic by 2022, though it grew by 42% over the past decade. "With increasing sustainability focus, better retail availability, and growing consumer demand for pesticide-free products, we expect stronger growth in the organic citrus category compared to conventional citrus."

At the product level, citrus has faced competition in recent years, particularly from exotic fruits like mangoes and kiwis. "At the same time, we have seen a significant increase in juicers at retail, and organic oranges appear to be benefiting from this trend. We are actively working to promote this positive development among our retail customers," the managers concluded.

For more information:

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