Egypt and South Africa dominate, Australia and China come into focus

# "Higher costs and monsoons complicated our orange imports this year"

India's orange imports span several supply windows, with the traditional dominance of Egyptian fruit experiencing strong price headwinds this year, says Nayan Dhameja, founder of fresh produce importer Ognam Global. "Egypt's Valencia, Navel, and Baladi varieties fill the demand gap from January through April. This year, however, CIF Nhava Sheva prices from Egypt jumped from USD 8 to almost USD 13 per box, primarily driven by juice factories in Egypt buying heavily, so importers like us paid much higher rates than the last season."

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South Africa is the second biggest source and considered a premium origin, Dhameja mentions. "Their Valencias and Navels, shipped between June and October, are distributed across upscale stores due to premium pricing. This year saw further increases of USD 1.5 to 2 per box, which has made volumes harder to sustain," he notes, adding that the quality meets expectations, but demand drops off quickly at these price points.

According to Dhameja, Australian Navel oranges are getting more attention, helped by a lower 15% duty under the India–Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement. He explains that sometimes, even with higher farm prices, Australia competes with South Africa because the landed cost is better in July and August. Dhameja mentions that while China is not yet a big player, Chinese Valencia and some hybrids are showing up between November and February. "Their window overlaps with Egypt's, so as prices rise everywhere, Indian importers are starting to show interest in Chinese oranges as a value option."

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Dhameja also pointed to a slowdown in consumer demand for oranges in the past quarter: "India saw one of its heaviest monsoons this year. Prolonged rains meant citrus did not feature much in shopping baskets, and imported oranges moved more slowly than usual." He notes that Egypt remains the steadiest for supply, but the demand side is now influenced by both high prices and weather. "We are watching Australian and Chinese arrivals for any shift, but local sentiment still matters."

By early October, the focus will turn to India's domestic season. "Once local fruit arrives, imports are expected to drop. Imported oranges will linger in urban retail, but most of the market will switch to Indian supply as soon as it is available.

Planning orange imports now means thinking about timing, price, and weather as all three are as important as where the fruit comes from," Dhameja concludes.

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Publication date: Wed 10 Sep 2025