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Booming citrus exports harming local supply

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South Africa's "very good year" for citrus exports seems to be having a detrimental effect on the supply to the domestic market, especially on oranges.

Fruit industry news site, Fresh Plaza, cited a procurement manager for one of the main retailers in South Africa, as saying that despite opening accounts with all major citrus producers over the past few years, he still couldn't get top quality oranges.

According to him, this is making it very difficult to grow the local citrus category which relies on high quality fruit.

"Navels and valencias are considered a commodity in South Africa and people will not pay the price that can be achieved when the fruit is exported. Retailers also have to compete against each other on price, which also adds pressure.

"Quality is a very important part of the equation when selling fresh produce," said the procurement manager. "Quality, price, availability are all important, but if you don't get quality right you will not grow the category."

According to him, South African consumers will buy from regional or international markets where the citrus is cheaper and there is much more choice.

Source: FreshPlaza.com