

"The world is a tragedy to those who feel, but a comedy to those who think" Horace Walpole

SENWES

This past week Mitchell Brooke and I were in the Senwes (Groblersdal and Marble Hall) citrus growing region – these are my reflections:

- Precision farming is becoming the norm on some farms – the ability to use technology to maximise efficiency on farms is being adopted by progressive growers and the results are starting to show. Technology innovations allow growers to mine an immense amount of data, giving them exception reports and information for informed decision making.
- Successful agriculture leads to beatification of a region – the pride that growers take in their farms is evident; and lifts the spirit of all those involved in their ventures.
- As in the Eastern Cape, there has been considerable capital investment in orchards, netting, packhouses and infrastructure. The packhouses boast cutting edge technology in sorting machinery – it is amazing to see fruit of all sizes and colour entering the packhouse, and ending up in uniform packing stations for specific markets.
- The latest South African unemployment statistics make for grim reading – it is heartening to see employment opportunities in rural areas, in a small way reducing the flow of people to urban areas. The Senwes region has multiple packhouses, and highly labour intensive agricultural products are produced in the region.
- Many of the farms in Senwes are multigenerational family farms – and the family culture and hospitality is very evident. Although the weather was biting cold – the hospitality kept one warm
- After last weeks' look at the 4% full Kouga dam, it was a relief to see the Loskop dam at over 95% full. Canals from the dam channel water to the orchards.
- Mitchell observes that this region is best placed to take advantage of rail opportunities to the port of Durban. Exporters in the region have taken advantage of this and the majority of fruit railed to Durban come from this region. The pioneers in stuffing containers at cold stores in the growing region, and then railing directly into the stack in Durban come from this region. With the forecast growth there will be added incentives to use rail in the future.

PACKED AND SHIPPED

Two thirds of this year's grapefruit crop are now packed and passed for export, as are almost half of the 2021 lemon crop. With bitterly cold weather at the end of this week fruit color should be excellent.

Unfortunately, the Nelspruit and Onderberg regions report some hail events; the impact still needs to be determined and will be reported through the variety focus groups.

The prediction still sits at about 160 million cartons – since the citrus season is about 160 days long this means that one million cartons have to pass through the logistics chain every day!! Any disruption causes build up in the chain, the chain is as strong as its weakest link.

End of Week 21 Million 15 Kg Cartons	Packed	Packed	Packed	Shipped	Shipped	Original Estimate	Latest Prediction	Final Packed
SOURCE: PPECB/AGRIHUB	2019	2020	2021	2020	2021	2021	2021	2020
Grapefruit	8.5 m	8.7 m	11.2 m	5.5 m	7.4 m	18 m	17 m	15.5 m
Soft Citrus	4.7 m	6.4 m	9.1 m	4 m	4.1 m	30.5 m	29.5 m	23.6 m
Lemons	8 m	14.7 m	13.7 m	11.5 m	10.7 m	30.2 m	30 m	29.6 m
Navels	3.2 m	4.8 m	5.4 m	1.8 m	2.1 m	26.3 m	26.3 m	26.2 m
Valencia	0.3 m	0.3 m	0.3 m	0.1m	0.1 m	58 m	58 m	55.1 m
Total	24.7 m	34.9 m	39.7 m	22.9 m	24.4 m	163 m	160.8 m	150 m