

"I don't know where I'm going from here, but I promise it won't be boring" David Bowie

WISHING YOU ALL THE BEST FOR 2022

This being the first newsletter of the new year, I would like to take this opportunity to wish all of you everything that you wish yourself for 2022. For the past two years we have viewed the new year with some trepidation, hoping that the year will bring about positive change. We live in unprecedented and uncertain times – let us make the most of the blessings that we receive, control the controllable's and be humble and thoughtful in all we do. I have no doubt that 2022 will come with a heap of opportunities, a load of challenges; good times and bad. Together we can grasp opportunities and meet the challenges. I look forward to working with you in 2022.

CROP FORECAST 2021: CONGRATULATIONS TO THE VARIETY FOCUS GROUPS (VFG) AND CITRUS MARKETING FORUM (CMF)

This is the first year that all VFG's have managed to get their projected crop estimate within 5% of the final volumes exported. Considering that this estimate is compiled in March, before the season starts, this is no mean feat. There was a lot of debate inside and outside the industry regarding the accuracy of the estimate, with many stating that the estimate would never be achieved: how wrong they were.

So congratulations to the VFG members, and the growers in their regions who have once again showed that this methodology works, and congratulations to the exporters in the Citrus Marketing Forum (CMF) who endorsed the estimate without making any changes.

The methodology is simple (some would call it crude). Regional representatives on the VFG's are given historical export volume figures for their region; based on these figures, and taking climatic and other variables into account they work with growers in their region to come up with an estimate for the forthcoming year. This estimate is then discussed at a specially convened VFG meeting to take a holistic look at the southern African estimate. Once the VFG's are comfortable with the estimate – it is taken to the CMF for endorsement by all southern African citrus industry stakeholders – it is here that exporters will comment on the marketing side of the estimate (bear in mind that this is an export estimate, not a production estimate). Once signed off by the CMF, the information is shared with all role-players.

The historical level of accuracy of the southern African citrus estimate is shown in the table below. The red blocks indicate estimates that were more than 10% different from the actual; orange blocks between 5 and 10% and green below 5%. The goal is to get within 10% - which has been achieved in 80% of the estimates since 2008. In terms of total crop, the estimate has been within 10% every year.

It would be interesting to hear how other methodologies in other citrus exporting countries fare; from media reports it seems that even the most technical methodologies fail to reach this level of accuracy.

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Grapefruit	2%	8%	1%	-9%	-15%	-14%	-7%	6%	12%	-1%	11%	-11%	-7%	-3%
Soft Citrus	1%	9%	Spot on	14%	Spot on	3%	10%	-1%	9%	1%	3%	Spot on	2%	1%
Lemons	-16%	8%	-6%	-9%	-6%	-5%	8%	10%	-7%	7%	-4%	Spot on	8%	3%
Navel	-8%	11%	-6%	-8%	7%	2%	1%	-3%	6%	-20%	4%	-10%	-2%	3%
Valencia	-3%	12%	-11%	-3%	-1%	6%	Spot on	5%	-11%	7%	Spot on	-12%	4%	5%
TOTAL	-5%	10%	-7%	-5%	-1%	5%	1%	4%	-2%	Spot On	2%	-8%	2%	1%