

Juicy market for SA citrus

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13 Mar 2017

Despite the uncertainty that Donald Trump's presidency in the US has introduced into the global economy, America remains an important market for South African citrus growers. They can also consider expanding their exports into that country through the introduction of locally produced niche-market citrus products.



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This is according to Marc Solomon, of the Crocodile Valley Citrus Company, who is an expert on citrus exports from South Africa into the United States. Addressing hundreds of citrus industry role players from around South Africa, Zimbabwe and Swaziland, Solomon was speaking on the last day of the Citrus Growers' Association (CGA) Citrus Summit at the Sun Boardwalk Hotel and International Convention Centre.

Tackling primarily the current status of South African citrus exports into the United States and access into that market, Solomon said the local industry enjoyed a very good reputation in the US " which has its own high-quality citrus industry in California.

"Since entering into that market in 2000, South African exports have shown a healthy upward trend, good growth," he said. "The exports peaked [last year] with 60,000 tonnes being exported into the US. While South Africa is not the only exporter to that country, we have 34% overall market share."

Solomon said that due to the high quality of the US industry, foreign citrus producers could only access that market when California closed its seasons each year.

He named Chile, Peru and Uruguay – which boast the advantage of being able to ship to both America's east and west coasts – as being among South Africa's biggest competitors in the US citrus market. Solomon said another positive development for South Africa was that it had recently been granted access to the country's Port of Houston in Texas, which would significantly reduce the logistics costs involved in delivering the produce to the various markets across the United States.

He said that, going forward, there were opportunities for growers to export soft citrus, which would be considered as niche products and included produce such as grapefruit and clementines, which were not of that high quality in the US.

The biennial CGA summit provides one of the country's more successful agricultural sectors with the opportunity to gain industry updates and a chance to network. Covering a wide range of issues and challenges faced by the industry, the summit format included presentations by experts, followed by question-and-answer sessions.

Source: Herald

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