

South Africa: Limpopo citrus packhouse gains highest BRC grading

South Africa's Naranja Packers recently received the highest gradings granted by the U.K.'s leading retail group and the British Retail Consortium Accreditation (BRC).



The Limpopo-based citrus packer received a Blue Rating from the Tesco supermarket chain and an AA grading from the BRC.

The facility, located in the Waterfalls River valley close to Burgersfort, packs all fruit produced by Indigo Fruit Farming, well-known for its ClemenGold mandarin brand which are marketed locally into Woolworths and internationally in a variety of countries.

Naranja also packs fruit from other farmers within the Burgersfort region.

With this accreditation Naranja is described as being "one of the few selected packhouses able to supply Tesco supermarkets."

"BRC is the leading global brand and consumer protection organisation. BRC sets the benchmark for good manufacturing practice, and helps provide assurance to customers that your products are safe, legal and of high quality," packhouse manager Josef Malan said in a release.

"Both audits started with a physical inspection of the facilities, interviews with employees on practices and processes, hygiene and quality verification," Josef says.

"All the details are verified against policy and procedures and validated by reviewing records at random. A full forward and backward traceability is also conducted to ensure that products are 100% traceable to and from the market."

According to the release the seasoned auditors complimented Naranja Packers Team and Senior Management's commitment and found it to be an excellent example of a well-implemented Food Safety and Quality management system.

Season progress

From an industry standpoint, figures from the Citrus Growers Association (CGA) of Southern Africa show the industry has so far packed 19.8 million cartons of fruit, compared to 19.4 million by this time last year.

Grapefruit is well ahead of 2016, with 6.9 million cartons packed against 4.4 million, while lemons are slightly ahead of last year with 6.9 million. However, soft citrus and Navels (3.3 million and 2.6 million respectively) are both behind 2016 levels (4.4 million and 4.2 million).

The total Navel estimate has dropped significantly on original predictions due to unexpected fruit drop, with the forecast now at 22.9 million cartons compared to 26.3 million. Estimates for other citrus categories remain similar to earlier forecasts.

“More grapefruit has been sent to the EU (54%) and Russia (10%) than in 2016 (50% and 7%). The Asian region has received less to date (28%) than 2016 (35%),” the CGA said.

“Due to technical barriers to trade the EU has received far less lemons (12%) than 2016 (32%). These lemons have been shipped to Russia (17% vs 6%), Asia (19% vs 13%) and Middle East (47% vs 43%).

“Soft Citrus to the EU (65%) is the same as 2016 – but the distribution to UK (43%) and mainland (22%) differs from 2016 (34% and 31% respectively).”

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