

Victor van Turenhout of OV Fruit about oranges:

"The emphasis will lie on the larger sizes in this South African season"

Last week, the Dutch company OV Fruit received its first shipment of Navels from South Africa. "These oranges come from Marble Hall [in the] Limpopo [province]. They're still a little light in color but are beautiful, juicy, and very tasty. We expect the first Valencias in four to five weeks, and later we'll also import Navel Cambria and Midnight. All nice, luxurious varieties," says Victor van Turenhout.

OV Fruit markets this South African citrus under the well-known Gogo brand. "The planning is already done, and beyond that, there's really not that much to do. Although some more supply is expected now, it's not in great volumes, while demand is very strong. Prices are good at up to €1.50 per kilo; that's certainly better than last year. It should, of course, be noted that everyone in the chain is facing higher costs, including the growers. So a specific price level is sorely needed."

OV Fruit works with an exporter in Johannesburg who organizes cold treatment locally. "It's one of the few exporters who can do that themselves. Entry controls are strict, but I haven't heard of any interceptions in Europe," says the commercial manager, adding that most free-market oranges are now starting to come from South Africa. "There are still some retail programs with Egypt, but that country is gradually nearing the end of its season, and you notice that in the quality."



According to Victor, the orange market will stay robust. "I hear Argentina and Uruguay have less fruit available, and South Africa is shipping more and more citrus to North America, the Middle East, and China. China, in particular, wants top quality. Nevertheless, we're still competing and have the advantage that we can supply nice varieties throughout the season under the same strong brand. We do that in 15 kg telescopic boxes and 15 or 16 kg open tops. For retail, we have a new 7 kg packaging," he says.

Most of OV Fruit's customers are in Europe. "The bulk goes to the free market, although we have some lines with retailers and are open to more." Victor sees this season's emphasis will be on the larger sizes. "It will be slightly harder to get the smaller sizes," he explains. "Not very many juicing-size Valencias are expected."

This Dutch importer gets lemons from the same shipper. "This market is good too, and despite the rain at the beginning of the season, the quality's good. Unlike the oranges, there are few large sizes, and the lemons, therefore, run smoothly," Victor concludes.

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