

"It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it" Aristotle

BRICS PLUS

This past week South Africa hosted the BRICS Summit. CGA attended the BRICS Business Forum – hats off to the organisers. Accreditation the day before the event was hassle-free, done efficiently, and with a smile. With 1 500 delegates this was no mean feat. Road closures were minimal and the men and ladies in blue were in abundance – directing people and vehicles with great cheer and politeness; and many blue light brigades as Ministers and Heads of State vied to be the most important.

The BRICS Business Forum was an eye-opener; in the past, these fora were dominated by discussions on energy and minerals. The Sandton event was dominated by agriculture – given the big rural population and importance of agriculture in the BRICS nations, agriculture should, and did, take center stage. The outcomes of the Business Forum have been adopted and delivered to the Heads of State. Important for the fruit industries is a focus on tariffs and attention to phytosanitary issues. Linking business people was a priority – with discussions on air linkages between the BRICS nations, visa-free entry, and a move to dealing in own currencies.

Within BRICS, South Africa is seen as a proxy for Africa and represents the wishes and priorities of the African continent. There was a lot of discussion on the African Continental Free Trade Agreement – and how Africa will be connected in the future.

Probably the biggest announcement from the Summit is the addition of six new countries to the partnership – thank goodness it is referred to as BRICS PLUS rather than BRICS+EEISU. While there is a lot of commentary on the geopolitical impact of this change, let's unpack the impact on the southern African citrus industry:

- For southern hemisphere citrus the inclusion of Argentina adds another significant lemon exporting country into the mix.
- For African citrus the inclusion of Egypt adds a significant orange producer and exporter into the mix.
- In terms of export destinations for southern African citrus BRICS already has the number 2 (China) and number 4 (Russia) in the fold; the addition of UAE brings in number 5 and Saudi Arabia number 8. In total over 600 000 tonnes of South African citrus is exported to these BRICS+ countries – 30% of total exports.
- In terms of potential markets, it was not long ago that South Africa exported 45 000 tonnes of fruit to Iran, in 2022 it was zero. There could be a possibility of reviving the citrus trade with Iran.

There will always be debates about the merits of being part of BRICS. Although the initial reason for such a formation was to challenge the existing world order – membership must start to benefit the people in these nations. These summits need to go beyond talk shows and deliver tangible benefits for those who pay the taxes.

Congratulations to the organisers and all those involved with the agenda. Special mention of Wandile Sihlobo, who presented the case for South African agriculture succinctly and objectively. He has a grasp of what is needed to stimulate inter BRICS trade, and the ability to convey the message in a deliberate and non-threatening manner.

CITRUS MARKETING FORUM (CMF)

Over seventy delegates attended the August CMF – once again expertly handled by Portia Magwaza (CGA Research Economist). It has been decided to hold the September monthly CMF (on 28/9/2023), as well as the close-out CMF meeting on 10 October 2023. Many in the industry feel the need to be present with their citrus industry colleagues – and it is suggested that a hybrid October meeting be held in the vicinity of Cape Town. Please could you indicate your preference (virtual, in person, or hybrid) to Portia portia@cga.co.za.

PACKED AND SHIPPED

End of week 33 Million 15 kg cartons	Packed	Packed	Packed	Shipped	Shipped	Original Estimate	Latest Prediction	Final Packed
SOURCE: PPECB/AGRIHUB	2021	2022	2023	2022	2023	2023	2023	2022
Grapefruit	19.7 m	15.9 m	13.9 m	14.0 m	12.7 m	14.4 m	14.1 m	16.7 m
Mandarins	25.8 m	27.4 m	32.7 m	23.4 m	29.2 m	34.1 m	33.8 m	31.8 m
Lemons	28.4 m	32.8 m	34.3 m	30.5 m	33.5 m	37.3 m	35.5 m	34.7 m
Navels	25.1 m	24.8 m	23.5 m	22.1 m	21.0 m	25.3 m	23.7 m	27.8 m
Valencia	28.9 m	29.9 m	32.4 m	19.3 m	21.8 m	54.5 m	49.4 m	53.8 m
Total	127.9m	130.8m	136.8m	109.3 m	118.2 m	165.6 m	156.5 m	164.8 m