

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

ROADS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Over the past two weeks I was on a road trip from Hillcrest, in KZN, through Zimbabwe to the border with Zambia. It was a case of the good, the bad and the ugly. Firstly, the good – South African national roads are a cause for pride. The N3 (except the stretch between Pietermaritzburg and Durban which is a dangerous construction zone) are some of the best roads I have travelled in the world. To put it in perspective – the return trip from Louis Trichardt to Hillcrest is 967 kilometres. Travelling on the N1 and then the N3, this took 9 hours including passing through the Pretoria/Joburg congestion, heavy mist from Mooi River to Pietermaritzburg and the roadworks from PMB to Durban. It was a pleasure to drive on these roads.

Staying with the good – the border post between South Africa and Zimbabwe was a breeze – all through in less than an hour. The South African side is a bit scruffy – immigration working from a mobile home. The Zimbabwe side is very impressive – but very expensive. The Zimbabwe border has been privatised and you pay for the use of their plush building and seamless system – in US\$ (you also pay a bridge toll for a two lane bridge that has not been worked on since it was built decades ago).

Then onto the bad. The road between Beit Bridge border and Masvingo in Zimbabwe is excellent when it is good and awful when it is bad – on this 300 km stretch there are 100 km of detours. The 200 km of newly built road is brilliant. The 100 km detour is basically through the bush; dodging the stream of heavy vehicles transporting goods to Zambia and DRC, as well as the weaving light motor vehicles – a 4-hour trip. From Masvingo to Harare (also 300 km) more of the new road has been built with only 40 km of detour.

Then the ugly; Harare to Chirundu on the Zambian border. You take your life into your hands driving this stretch. The road has been eroded from both sides leaving (sometimes) a strip of tar barely wide enough for two vehicles. Where the erosion is bad, the heavy vehicles cross onto oncoming traffic scattering small vehicles onto the almost non-existent verges. Sometimes this scattering is difficult as the verge is well below the level of the tar. Most of the road is potholed and no matter how much you weave you will hit a number of bone jarring potholes that rearrange everything in your vehicle and mean a visit to the dentist to redo tooth fillings. At the other end of this road are tourist spots like lake Kariba and Mana Pools National park. Tourists who can afford it fly into these destinations; the fearless take on the drive, and in time, most will simply stay away.

Although South African national roads are excellent (paid for by road users through tolls), provincial and district roads are needing attention. It is important to address these challenges now, some roads are already in the same state of disrepair as the Harare – Chirundu stretch.

For those in South Africa who bemoan our fuel prices, diesel in Zimbabwe varies between R32 and R34 per litre.

CITRUS MARKETING FORUM (CMF)

The monthly mini CMF's have proved to be popular with the number of delegates ranging from 132 in May to 50 in September (average 85 delegates). Well done to Werner van Rooyen and Paul Hardman who have guided the meetings and kept them to under an hour, to Portia Magwaza and the Variety Focus Groups for the updated statistics and to the FPEF members for their thorough market feedbacks.

The last CMF will be held on 10 October 2023 at 14h15 and will be a more thorough meeting. To get the link please contact Portia Magwaza portia@cga.co.za.

PACKED AND SHIPPED

| End of Week 38 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 | 20.3 m | 16.7 m | 14.7 m | 14.7 m | 13.7 m | 14.4 m | 14.9 m | 16.7 m |
| Mandarins | 30.4 m | 31.5 m | 37.3 m | 30.6 m | 37.0 m | 34.1 m | 37.5 m | 31.8 m |
| Lemons | 30.8 m | 34.4 m | 35.5 m | 33.5 m | 34.8 m | 37.3 m | 35.9 m | 34.7 m |
| Navels | 27.0 m | 27.5 m | 24.7 m | 26.5 m | 24.0 m | 25.3 m | 24.9 m | 27.8 m |
| Valencia | 52.3 m | 51.4 m | 50.2 m | 43.1 m | 44.5 m | 54.5 m | 51.0 m | 53.8 m |
| Total | 160.8m | 161.5m | 162.4m | 148.4 m | 154.0 m | 165.6 m | 164.2 m | 164.8 m |