

A very different citrus harvest for South Africa

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The citrus harvest in Citrusdal in South Africa's Western Cape is running around a week early this year, this means they are starting harvest at the same time as the Marblehall area in the north of the country who are running two and a half weeks late.

"We are finding ourselves in a situation which we are not normally in. Having Navels at the same time as the Marblehall area," explained Gerrit van der Merwe from ALG Marketing. "It is good for us to be there at the same time with our good quality Navels. Our fruit is around half a size smaller than last year, so we might be a bit disadvantaged on the smaller sizes but we won't know for sure until the season really gets underway."

According to other growers sizes throughout South Africa are generally smaller in the rest of the country.



California are running longer than last year, and according to Gerrit the supermarkets are switching (at a normal time) from domestic to imported citrus. "Early fruit has gone to Europe, which is a good thing as it will give the US market a couple of weeks to clean up."

Gerrit said they are also early on the Middle East market with the very well coloured Navels which only come from Citrusdal. "It is being received very well in the Middle East."

Citrusdal has not been affected too much by the drought, packouts are said to be high and so are the brix levels, giving very good eating quality.

"We have slightly smaller sizes but better than we expected. This is the first time we have experienced drought conditions and we expected it to be a lot worse, but it didn't affect us that badly in Citrusdal," said Gerrit. "Navel volumes will be slightly down on last year, but last year was a very big year so this is above average really."

"Citrusdal is perfect for growing citrus and we have a very good water source with the Elephants River, we also had enough winter rains and our rainy season is still ahead of us we just need a normal one to see us through."

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Publication date: 5/9/2016
Author: Nichola Watson
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