

Citrus market to pick up in Europe

Consumption of citrus in Europe wanes during the summer months, as citrus imports from the Southern Hemisphere face stiff competition from summer fruit like apricots, peaches and nectarines. But, as children return to school and consumers return from vacations, demand for citrus will increase in the coming weeks.

"There are lots of promotions being set up with supermarkets, so I think demand should increase," said Olivier Fakhri of Helfer France. About 70 percent of Helfer's citrus supplies come from South Africa, and volumes from there for them have been somewhat light during the summer because there's not much demand during that time. As demand increases in September, Olivier believes prices will remain pretty stable as increased volume will match that demand.



There has been worry this season that a citrus disease could affect orange volumes, but, so far, that hasn't been the case. Although it's too early to say the citrus disease won't be a factor this year, everyone has been working hard to minimize its impact.

"Everyone is concerned and everyone is being careful so that we don't have a problem," said Olivier. "It seems to be in control, but I think we have to wait until at least mid-September, and if we only have a few interceptions of shipments because of the disease, then we can say it will be a good year, or at least feel an improvement"



Grapefruit

Grapefruit prices have been favorable to suppliers in Europe this year, as a relatively empty pipeline has propped up the market. Overall consumption in Europe has been on a downward trend over the last several years, but the market situation has been, nevertheless, good for Helfer this season.

"It's been a very surprising year with high price levels for grapefruit," noted Olivier. "The South African season is coming to an end, but we'll still have some shipments of late varieties in September, which is quite positive for us because it will allow us to fulfill our supermarkets programs." Some growers will switch over to grapefruit supplies from

Mexico, though Olivier noted that they prefer to stick to South African supplies through September because the early Mexican varieties aren't as sweet as the later Mexican ones. Once the Florida season begins, end October, Helfer then complements its year-round supply with grapefruit from that state.



"We had grapefruit from Mexico until three years ago, and we only import Mexican fruit in September or October if we need to cover us if we don't have enough fruit," said Olivier. "But with big players in Europe, it's difficult to get a share of that market."



Clementines

Later this season, in early January, Helfer will begin importing clementines from Israel. Like the other items in its citrus program, clementines don't sell well during the summer. For that reason, said Olivier, Helfer doesn't begin importing clementines until the Israeli season begins early next year.

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