

# Challenging South Africa citrus season into the U.S. is expected to finish on a high note

South Africa's citrus season into the US started off well but was impacted by heavy rainfall, causing some disruptions in the supply chain. Certain regions saw a loss in production and weather also delayed the loading of vessels at certain times during the season. "Our group of growers, shippers and importers always puts a lot of effort in planning out the season," says Suhanra Conradie with Summer Citrus from South Africa. "Usually, our estimated volume is pretty realistic and tends to increase by 10 to 15 percent as the season progresses. However, as a result of unforeseen weather conditions, this year's volume was adjusted downward by 10 percent from original estimates."

Taking a closer look at individual varieties, easy peelers were down most percentage wise, followed by Midnight oranges and Navels. Volumes of Star Ruby grapefruit on the other hand, witnessed an increase. A combination of strong movement and lower overall volumes resulted in a demand – exceeds – supply situation for most of the season.



*MSC Lorena, containing a record load for the group. Picture taken at the port of Cape Town. This vessel arrived in the US the 3rd week of September.*

### **Record number of containers**

Currently, the last three vessels with citrus from South Africa are on the water and are expected to arrive during the last 10 days of October. Midnights make up the majority of volume and some easy peelers will still arrive as well as the last bit of Navel oranges. One of the last three vessels to arrive is MSC Carmen, containing about 330 40ft containers of citrus fruit, which would be the largest container shipment on record for the group. Holding the record so far is MSC Lorena. This vessel arrived at the end of September, carrying 320 40ft containers of citrus fruit, which is the equivalent of 6,000+ pallets.

Fruit has been arriving at both sides of the Delaware river. Dedicated break bulk vessels arrived at the Gloucester Terminal in New Jersey and were complemented by a container service into the Port of Philadelphia. "The container service is a seasonal call, specifically for our group," said Conradie.



*William Kopke, Managing Director of William Kopke Jr. and Suhanra Conradie at Kopke's facility on the East Coast. In the background is citrus from South Africa.*

### **In-person meetings**

Just last week, Conradie returned from a visit to the U.S. East Coast. "It was very valuable to meet with our business partners in person," she said. "Relationships form the backbone of our business, and it was good to have face-to-face interaction. Building personal relationships is crucial when you're working with a commodity that has an ever-changing lifecycle. Knowing each other helps in adjusting quickly, making decisions promptly, and more forward."



*Eric Holt, Chief Commercial Office of Holt Logistics (Port of Philadelphia operator) and Suhanra Conradie during her most recent visit to the U.S.*



For more information:

Suhanra Conradie

**Summer Citrus from South Africa**

suhanra@summercitrus.com

www.summercitrus.com (<http://www.summercitrus.com>)

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Author: Marieke Hemmes

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