

# THE PRODUCE NEWS

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## Summer Citrus from South Africa hosts successful planning session

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Now in its 20th year serving the U.S. with fresh citrus during the summer months, Summer Citrus from South Africa held its planning session in Citrusdal, South Africa earlier this month.

The morning began with a warm welcome from Boet Mouton, SCSA's chairman of the board of directors. Mouton explained the importance of importer partners to continue to deliver on the association's promise to provide deliciously sweet tasting citrus fruit during the summer months, which complements the U.S. production season. In addition, the chairman seeks to increase sales of easy peelers and mandarins while driving demand through carefully constructed promotional plans with retail partners. South Africa is the second-largest exporter of citrus globally and in light of this, Mouton's ultimate goal for the overall program in 2019 is to increase market share for the country's fruit in the U.S.

According to Gerrit van der Merwe Jr., member of the SCSA board of directors, growing in Citrusdal is a blessing because it is the heart of the country's citrus production. After emerging from a three year drought, the growers of SCSA are looking for the "first proper citrus crop without any water restrictions," underlining the association's excitement around the potential of the upcoming season. Looking ahead, van der Merwe anticipates significant growth in mandarin production in the future.

Featured speaker Erin Meder, general manager of Capespan North America, affirmed the significance of a cohesive grower model during her presentation at the planning session. She defined South Africa's grower collaboration as a "self-regulated honor system" with a unified voice, providing accurate information and quick evaluation to solve industry challenges. As a result, importers are able to provide a healthy supply of popular citrus fruits to retail partners in the U.S. from June to October while also providing an elevated level of quality in both flavor and appearance.

From a marketing perspective, Megan Zweig, vice president of DMA Solutions explained the importance of branding SCSA during the summer months both to retailers and consumers alike. She explained how important it is to position fruit from South Africa as exotic and "special" when merchandising to the U.S. as product that will produce a "unique experience" for shoppers due to the exceptional sweetness, high quality and overall value.

Mayda Sotomayor-Kirk, chief executive officer of Seald Sweet and one of the original champions of SCSA's collaboration underlined the significance of the farming work being done in Citrusdal by SCSA farmers. She stated how this special group is built on a foundation of collaboration, state-of-the-art sustainability practices and logistics solutions. She went on to share how challenging the U.S. market can be. As a group focused on supplying the U.S. market with citrus fruit from South Africa, she encouraged the stakeholders to see how the opportunities outweigh the challenges.

Chris Cockle, senior director of imports for Wonderful Citrus was present as an importer of SCSA, to share insights on the overall summer citrus category, provide a category outlook for the future and to provide an overview of the upcoming summer season for the Halos brand. Since packing South African citrus in the Halos brand in 2018, Chris looks forward to a healthy summer season ahead.

Suhanra Conradie, chief executive officer of SCSA, concluded the planning session. "As an association now in its 20th season serving the U.S. market, we have faced a lot of challenges. By facing those challenges, we've established a successful model of collaboration and must not forget the lessons we've learned. We need to stay at the forefront of where the market is going and innovate along the way. What some view as a group of competitors, both on the production and importing side of our business, must be viewed as a collaborative effort with one mission in mind and that is to provide our friends in the U.S. with a stable and high quality supply of citrus during the summer months."

Conradie invited attendees of the Viva Fresh Expo in San Antonio to visit booth No. 34 at 2:30 p.m. on Saturday, April 27 for a champagne toast to commemorate SCSA's 20th year serving the U.S. market with summer citrus from South Africa.

