

Britain's favourite fresh produce magazine since 1895



By Fred Meintjes

Thursday 22nd October 2020, 12:14 GMT

Namibia eyes better grape season



After the disappointments of the previous campaign, Namibian table grape producers are upbeat about the new season

Namibian table grape exporters are upbeat about prospects for the coming season, with the initial forecast indicating a higher export volume compared with last year's disappointing crop.

The country is expected to export around 7.4m cartons this season, when last year just over 6m cartons were shipped.

Well-known Namibian table grape figure, Andre Vermaak, who is group agronomist of global fresh produce Jupiter Group, said that the forecast was based on feedback from all Namibian exporters.

"In this forecast we can see the effect of new plantings of the most exciting varieties," said Vermaak, who also plays a crucial role in the International evaluation of IFG varieties.

Local growers has invested in a number of varieties from the ARRA range and

from IFG, he continued, which are all doing well in the main growing region of Aussenkehr on the northern bank of the Orange River, forming the border between South Africa and Namibia.

Vermaak said that originally the season was expected to be a bit later than last year, but recent hot weather may have advanced things a bit.

"While the major production is still concentrated around Aussenkehr, there are interesting new developments in the desert-like region towards Ais-Ais, the well-known tourist spot in Southern Namibia," he explained. "These grapes will probably be harvested and packed around 26 October, and will definitely be the very first grapes in Southern Africa for some time to come."

These very early grapes in extreme climatic conditions will probably not initially make it onto the export market, because the trade in and around Johannesburg will snap the grapes up as

soon as they become available at excellent prices.

That is perhaps why the talk at Aussenkehr is more about the exciting new varieties now growing in volume.

One person who has probably done more than anyone to identify and bring these varieties which is transforming the Namibian grape industry to the country is Vermaak, who worked closely with South African table grape legend, the late Piet Geldenhuys, in scanning international breeding programmes for decades.

One of the varieties which is expected to make a huge impact, he pointed out, is the new white seedless, Timson, which ripens in the same period as Thompson Seedless.

Thompson Seedless has for some 40 years been key to the success of the Southern African table grape business. Now it seems as if Timson, a large-berried firm white grape, may provide alternatives.

<http://www.fruitnet.com/americafruit/article/1474/parts-of-san-diego-quarantined-as-psyllid-count-mounts>

© Copyright Market Intelligence Ltd - Fruitnet.com 2014. The copyright on this article and all content published on Market Intelligence Ltd - Fruitnet.com is held by Market Intelligence Ltd - Fruitnet.com Limited, a joint venture between Market Intelligence Limited and Dr Rolf M Wolf Media GmbH. All rights reserved. Neither this article nor any part of it may be reproduced, stored or transmitted in any form, including print-outs, screen grabs and information retrieval systems, without the prior permission of the copyright owners.

FRUITNET.COM

"Timson, an SFNL variety, is a very producer friendly variety which simply means that it needs little work in the vineyard to produce an excellent crop," Vermaak confirmed.

He said that a lot of the pioneering work was done in the past to get the new plant material into Namibia.

"We worked with breeders in the US, namely IFG, SNFL and Grappa and the Arra range, to open the doors for Namibian producers. The benefit is now starting to show with a lot of new varieties such as Arra 15, Arra 29, Sweet Globe and Sugar Crisp from IFG, as well as Timson, Timco and Ivory of SFNL being planted all over the valley."

This is of huge benefit to a small table grape industry like Namibia, he said.

This year's expected export crop of 7.4m cartons indicate that export volumes are beginning to grow again after some years of hovering around the 6m mark.

There is a potential for around 10m cartons in the early South African season – but it could be a few years before this target is achieved.

According to Vermaak, Covid-19 had an influence on each and everyone's life around the world. "It seems that the peaceful valley of Aussenkehr is nicely protected against the risk of a lot of people moving there from different identities around the world."

Expectations for the early market are very positive and could be of benefit to the Namibian industry because it is so early on the market. "Here in Aussenkehr the start of the season should be around Week 45 and week 46," he added.

Enjoyed this free article from Eurofruit Magazine and its team of editors? Don't miss out on even more in-depth analysis, plus all the latest news from the fresh produce business. Subscribe now to [Eurofruit Magazine](#).