

SA's overall fruit imports growing

South Africa is one of the fastest growing fresh fruit markets in the world, according to the latest data by the National Agricultural Marketing Council and the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.

While it is a large fruit producer in its own right, imports of fruit have increased at an annual average rate of 8% and 25%, measured in quantity and value terms respectively, over the past 10 years.

The SA fresh fruit market is developing rapidly at both the wholesale and retail level.

As from 2004, overall fruit imports grew exponentially, largely due to a strengthening rand and expansion in the formal retail sector.

Supermarkets evolve

The evolution of supermarkets can be largely attributed to rapid urbanisation, rising urban incomes as well as trade liberalisation, the data indicates.

Imports of exotic fruit are currently growing at an average rate of 10%, while subtropical fruit are growing at an average rate of 49% year-on-year.

SA consumers are showing an increasing interest in exotic fruit consumption, based on these fruits' inherent health benefits relating to antioxidant and energising properties.

Zimbabwe market falls

The research shows that over the last 10 years Mozambique and Zimbabwe were the main suppliers of bananas, pineapples and other fruit kinds, and together they represented 48% of the share of fruit imports.

However, there was a significant drop in the market of Zimbabwe.

Spain is third largest supplier of fruit in SA in 2009, mainly supplying deciduous and citrus fruit during the off-season period.

Fruit imports from Sri Lanka and Israel are declining as these countries shifted their focus to developed markets with shorter distances to move fruit.

In 2009, banana fruit contributed 42 % of total SA fruit imports, up from 8 % in 1999. Imports of citrus however experienced a declining trend as a result of local citrus production increasing significantly.

While citrus imports declined from 18 676 tons in 2000 to 3463 tons in 2009, local production has increased from 1.711 million tons in 2000 to 2.185 million tons in 2009.

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