

Southern Hemisphere countries are forecast to export more citrus during the 2021 season, with the soft citrus and lemon categories driving the growth.

Exports from Argentina, Australia, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Peru, South Africa, and Uruguay are set to grow by 13 percent to 3.8 million metric tons (MT), according to the World Citrus Organization (WCO), which recently held its first annual meeting online.

The estimate comes despite expectations of a smaller increase in the total crop, which is forecast to grow by 3 percent to 22.7 million MT.

The soft citrus showed the greatest increase in production, by 11 percent, with a significant increase in export volumes of over 20 percent to 1 million tonnes of export. Orange production remained broadly stable (+2 percent), whilst lemon (+2 percent) and grapefruit (+6 percent) showed greater increases.

Exports are also expected to increase for all varieties, orange (+12 percent), lemon (+7 percent) and grapefruit (+10 percent).

"Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, a positive trend of consumers' demand for fruit and veg. was noted, in particular for citrus fruit, widely recognized for its high nutritional value, notably in terms of vitamin C content," said Philippe Binard, Secretary General of WCO.

"The large volume available is positive news as it will meet the increased demand".

On the processing side, a total of 13.4 million tonnes of citrus are expected to be destined to the juice market, which constitutes a slight increase of 1 percent compared to the previous year.

Eric Imbert (CIRAD- Technical Secretariat of WCO) said: "The Southern Hemisphere citrus export continues to grow in particular for lemons and easy peelers. The Southern Hemisphere today represents 27% of the global citrus market."

During WCO's AGM, members also reviewed the past season's results with a focus on the impact of the covid pandemic, and analysed the estimations for the current season.

In addition, during the meeting, Natalia Santos, Deputy Secretary General of WCO announced that: "Members decided to set-up a formal working group on health & nutrition."

"This will enable better knowledge exchange among members on citrus nutritional assets

and will also contribute towards a better understanding of the health attributes of citrus. The first meeting of WCO's Health & Nutrition focus group will take place in the second semester of 2021," she added.

Jose Antonio Garcia (Ailimpo) and Justin Chadwick (CGA), the co-chairs of the WCO - which was [established in October 2019](#) - said: "The full first year of operation allowed the organisation to quickly build a representative association and provide the benefits and value to the members".