

US(CA): Mandarin season starts up

Harvesting of mandarins in California is ramping up, and shippers are hoping for a good market as interest in the category has been growing over the last several years.

“We just started harvesting our Satsuma Owari mandarins this week,” said Don Goforth of Family Tree Farms. “So far, the crop is very nice in terms of sizing and looks.” Family Tree Farms' mandarins are tree-ripened, so recent cold weather that rolled into many parts of California has been good for coloring.

“We've seen rapid advancement in coloring, and sugar levels have been high,” said Goforth. “With this variety, you have to be careful with late-season rains and frost because it's a pretty short window where we harvest these.” Harvesting is expected to last into the middle of December.

Category growing

Interest in mandarins and easy-peelers has been growing over the last few years. Consumers appreciate the sweet taste and convenience of the product, and sales of mandarins and related fruit have reflected that.

“Consumer response to hand citrus, in general, has been unbelievable,” said Goforth. “Our mandarin is niche because very few people are tree-ripening this product, which makes it incredibly sweet. It's a wonderful product and it's very much in-demand, but the entire category is doing well.”

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