

## Late plums take advantage of empty markets and early springtime

Coming into the market towards the beginning of the Northern spring, through late varieties as well as through SmartFresh treatment, means that South African exporters can send plums to the Northern Hemisphere at a time when consumer appetite for stonefruit is rising, along with temperatures.



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The South African plum industry is currently harvesting its late plum varieties, notably Angeleno, Southern Belle and Flavor Fall. The latter's harvest started this week. "The fruits have a very nice size," reports Wessel Erasmus of Banhoek Fruit Packers. Jako van Lill of Fruits Unlimited says: "Flavor Fall will be picked up to week 17 and shipped out until week 20. In the European market, customers prefer a late plum like Flavor Fall to the early plums from, for instance, Spain. We send Flavor Fall to the EU and the UK, and the rest to other markets like Canada, the Middle East, Southeast Asia and Africa."

Flavor Fall, a variety developed by Zaiger Genetics in the USA, has been commercially planted for only about 10 years. After a few years of expansion, the acreage is currently stable at approximately 180ha, of which roughly half is not yet in production. Flavor Fall is a pluot, an interspecific fruit with plum, prune and apricot genes.

Incidentally, South African exporters find that prune (plum) exports to Hong Kong, Singapore, and Malaysia over Chinese New Year (28 January, this year) find a very appreciative market. So much so, that Fruits Unlimited sent 90% of their consignment of prunes (plums) by air. There are only a handful of prune (plum) producers in South Africa. The smaller size of the fruit translates to more labour regarding picking and packing.

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