



SA's fresh fruit and vegetable supply steady in face of COVID-19 lock down



As an essential part of the country's food security network, South Africa's fresh fruit and vegetable supply channels will remain active and efficient – even given the recent announcement of lock down measures...

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jaco Oosthuizen'.

Jaco Oosthuizen

RSA GROUP CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

As South Africa braces for lock down, the good news is that our access to fresh fruit and vegetables will remain unaffected.

'Fresh fruit and vegetables are an essential part of the food security network and South Africa is filled with world class producers, big and small, who produce fresh produce of the highest quality and pack and transport it, adhering to required international hygiene standards,' says Jaco Oosthuizen, CEO of RSA Group, the country's largest fresh produce sales organisation.

To ensure this high level of adherence, RSA Group's Business Unit Heads are running ongoing briefing sessions on hygiene protocols at all of its fresh produce markets of operation. This ongoing programme will allow it to keep on servicing the crucial local retail sector effectively and safely, while also ensuring that its *Freshworld* export operation continues to do business for all of its producers and their customers.

'We trust that market management and relevant local authorities will be taking matching and supporting health and safety actions,' says Oosthuizen. 'It's crucial that all industry players coordinate their efforts to protect local businesses and ensure consumer safety and national food security at this time.'

Thankfully, South Africa's fresh produce market system is robust and able to adjust to sudden changes in supply and demand. Markets remain the primary reference point for fresh produce prices, and the country's markets are currently fully stocked. Stable prices are reflective of this.

'The system is structured to ensure producers and buyers are able to interact easily, even when external conditions change suddenly,' says Oosthuizen. 'This is a key strength of the South African fresh produce market distribution system, whether it's facing a crisis or not.'

'People need to be healthy in the middle of this pandemic, and fresh fruit and vegetables play a crucial role,' Oosthuizen adds. 'Fresh produce markets across the country are following strict hygiene standards, so when it comes to shopping and eating fresh fruit and vegetables, consumers should simply focus on following the basic COVID-19 guidelines. Make sure you wash your hands well, and regularly, and of course wash the produce thoroughly before cooking or eating it.'

'The fresh produce market system is strong and functioning well,' Oosthuizen concludes. 'I am confident we will meet all national food security requirements during lock down.'

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