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REDSUN RAISIN REPORT #1 – 2020
SOUTH AFRICAN RAISIN CROP JANUARY 2020

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An Overview of the SA 2020 Raisin Crop

The 2020 raisin crop in South Africa has started. We have received our first deliveries from our farmers in the south of Namibia and Vredendal (west of the main raisin production region.) The grapes ripen sooner in these zones.

For the first time, one of these farmers is making goldens. The product looks good in our Redsun bins as they are loaded for transport to our factory in Keimoes.



The first goldens from Namibia, being loaded to transport to Redsun factory

Generally, the weather pattern has been good for the development of the grapes. There has been a few heavy downpours of rain (Upington 70mm in one shower in December, and at our factory 40mm in one shower mid January). Fortunately, we did not see bursting of the grape

berries as the rain water is absorbed due to the sugar content. It seems the development of the sugar was not yet critical at that moment to be affected by the rain.

The temperature has been between 38C and 45C which has given a nice ripening process. In some areas the temperature has been between 48C and 50C. In these areas we see faster ripening process. We foresee good quality, full bodied raisins from the crop. Everything still depends on the weather at the time of drying. Absolutely critical.

According to the assessment of Raisins SA, the 2020 crop will be 81,000mt. this is a new record. The 2019 crop was 75,000mt.

The objective of Redsun is to buy 13,000mt of the crop. That is 16% of the crop.

Thompson Raisins

Carry over stock of Thompson mediums is a fact in South Africa at present. We are not sure what the extent of the carry-over will be, because there is little or no communication between processors. We base our information mainly on “rumours”. There is said to be about 18,000mt of farmers stock Thompson medium raisins from the 2019 crop that will be carried over as at 1 January 2020. We have not seen this size of carryover in South Africa for many years.

Of the projected 2020 SA crop of 81,000mt, there is anticipated to be 37,000mt of Thompson mediums made, which is 5400mt Thompson mediums less than from the 2019 crop. It is a price factor that caused the shift of Thompson mediums back to normal levels. This volume, taken together with the carry over means South Africa will be offering 55,000 mt of Thompson mediums during the 2020 sales campaign (37,000 crop plus 18,000 carryover). That is another record. Prices are projected to be low, which should assist greatly in the effective sales of the Thompson medium crop.

Redsun will be offering the following types of Thompson mediums;

Thompson medium berry count 220-290 per 100gr

Thompson midget berry count 450-550 per 100gr

Thompson medium low moisture with maximum moisture content of 14%

Thompson medium choice ZERO chemical residue

Thompson medium certified organic



There is a good grape crop on the vines.

Thompson Jumbo raisins are being made by table grape farmers, with the intention of diversifying on a sustainable basis into the raisin industry. Blocks of grapes are being reserved for raisin production, and the raisins do not come from grape packhouse rejects (low sugar), as the situation used to be. Therefore, we see full bodied sweet Thompson jumbo raisins ideal for the snack industry.

South Africa usually makes about 2000mt of Thompson jumbos each year. We suspect that SA will be producing about 2500mt in 2020.

Flame Raisins

Flame medium raisins (berry count 190-270 per 100gr) are generally slightly bigger in size than the Thompson medium varieties. Flame variety grapes (untreated) makes a very good raisin. It is round in form, black in colour and possesses a strong flavour. We predict that there will be about 6000mt of Flame medium raisins produced in SA in 2020. It is a popular grape among farmers.

Flame used to be well known as a jumbo size raisin. SA Farmers will no longer be making jumbos from Flame variety grapes. There will be adequate volumes of similar black jumbo raisins with strong flavours that are very good substitutes for the Flame variety.



Tawney grapes, another Flame substitute.

These new varieties are made from the new cultivars of grapes that the supermarkets are now testing for table grapes. Redsun has identified some varieties shown in the enclosed photo, which are very similar to the properties of the Flame jumbo. These varieties are

Crimson
Midnight Beauty
Autumn Royal
Timco
Tawney

Buyers can see the colour is the same, but the shapes are different. Other important elements are the skin texture and the flavour. The table grape industry is changing varieties. There may be more suitable new varieties for making raisins that come into the market in the future.

SA used to make about 1,500 Flame jumbo raisins. There will be almost zero Flame variety jumbos in 2020, but we expect about 4000mt of Black jumbos of various varieties to be produced. As we take the black jumbos in, we will assess the properties of the particular varieties, and inform our customers accordingly.

The sulphuring of these new dark varieties is also under experimentation. So far the results look very positive to produce a nice pink coloured jumbo



Varieties of dark jumbo raisins replacing Flame varieties.



Timoco variety sulphured

Goldens Sultanas

Due to the low price offered to farmers for Thompson mediums, the industry was anticipating an exceptionally large volume of golden mediums to be made in 2020. The price difference between what is offered for goldens compared to what is offered for Thompsons, is back to the traditional levels. Therefore, the farmers that have the correct infrastructure will prefer to make goldens. In this way they earn more money from their grape crop. The farmer can use the same grape for making goldens as he will use for Thompsons.

Redsun anticipates that SA will make 25,000 mt of golden mediums this crop. Not the large volumes as initially speculated. The reason is that the cost of establishing the infrastructure for making goldens is very high. It is not something a farmer will do for one or two years while the pricing is convenient. By the way, SA made only 12,000mt golden mediums in 2019, due to the high prices paid for Thompson mediums.

The volume of golden mediums represents a big swing of more than double the quantity from 2019, but the volume represents a return to “normal” volumes.

The sugar development in the grapes is positive. Therefore, this should result in good colouring. The effect of rain mentioned earlier in this report, must still be seen. The effect may be “swartbakkies” or skin damage at the capstem caused by absorption of water and bruising of the skin.

We expect about 3000mt of golden jumbos to be made. This raisin type continues to develop slowly but surely each year.

OR Sultanas medium

It is always difficult to foresee the volume of OR sultanas that will be produced. The effect of raisin is radical on the colour of the OR. The moisture in the air, during drying will cause colour to darken and therefore not be capable of delivering the product in as an OR. It will be graded as a WP sultana, where the colour specification is more lenient.

During 2019 SA made 1,500mt of ORs. 2020, we believe the same quantity will be made.

Currants

The effect of the drought in the Vredendal region (about 540km from the Redsun factory) has passed. Therefore, we anticipate a currant crop that will revert back to the “normal” volumes of 4,500mt. In 2019, the volume was 1600mt of currants.

The berry size this year is 1100-1300 berries per 100gr. The berries are fully developed and possess a strong currant flavour.

Currants on the vine close to harvest



WP Sultanas medium

Farmers were initially excited about the rumours of high prices being offered by processors for WP sultanas in SA. These were higher than the anticipated prices for Thompsons! This price arises presumably by the present situation where Turkish #9 RTU are being offered at the same price as South Africa are offering our Thompson medium choice.

During 2019, SA produced 1000mt of WP sultana mediums. We anticipate about 5000mt of WP sultana mediums from the 2020 crop.

There are many questions that you will have about the new crop. I will be happy to assist with information. If I cannot assist, we have a wonderful team of people at Redsun who will have the answers you need.

Redsun is selling 2020 now.

Peter Kuilman
27 January 2020