

# Côte d'Ivoire mango

## Serious uncertainty for 2003

The political uncertainty in Côte d'Ivoire may call the West African mango export season into question. With less than a month to go, operators are having difficulty finding satisfactory logistic solutions. The stakes are considerable: the shipping of some 11 000 tonnes of mango by sea from the port of Abidjan between week 11 and week 25.

Côte d'Ivoire is the leading African supplier of mangoes to the EU, shipping nearly 11 000 tonnes. The second largest supplier of the European market, with an 8 percent share, far behind Brazil (44 percent), Côte d'Ivoire is the main origin from April to June and covers 25 to 50 percent of EU requirements during this period. The mangoes exported from Côte d'Ivoire are from the north of the country in a zone straddling Burkina Faso and Mali. Whether harvested and packed in Mali, Burkina Faso or northern Côte d'Ivoire, the fruits must be transported to the coast for shipment in containers or conventional vessels. The port of Abidjan is a natural, traditional point of departure by sea. Air shipments form only a very minor part of exports from the area and it is not possible to base a substantial season on exports by air alone (*Fruitrop* 97, pages 2 to 6).

### One man's sorrow ...

Concern is growing in a context of very strong political agitation and a country cut in two (production is in the north and the south has the seaboard). Trade operators, exporters and importers are seeking logistic

solutions. Mangoes might be hauled from the north of the country to Yamoussoukro to where containers would be taken. Once filled, they would return to the port of Abidjan. A solution via Ghana is also being assessed. The containers would be packed in the production zones and then taken to the port of Accra, which has been strongly encumbered since the beginning of the troubles in Côte d'Ivoire. It can be seen that viability is a problem whatever the solution examined.

### ...is another man's joy

Indeed, the flow of mango from Côte d'Ivoire could be reduced to a trickle. However, the neighbouring countries such as Burkina Faso, Mali and Guinea possess production potential and are ready to provide a partial replacement for the origin. In particular, Guinea has planned to double the quantities exported in comparison with 2002.

The European market is thus far from being threatened by a shortage. As one man's sorrow is another man's joy, the competing origins can take over. It can be predicted that Peru, South Africa and Ecuador will be present right

at the beginning of the season (March), with Mexico and possibly Puerto Rico covering the second part of the 'African' season (from April onwards). Brazil should also play a significant role thanks to its production potential and its ability to harvest nearly all the year round. However, it will be handicapped by the dominance of Tommy Atkins in its range of varieties. Furthermore, the strength of the euro against the US dollar might well encourage Latin American countries to ship their produce to Europe rather than the United States. Inconceivable only a few years ago, this ability for origins to replace other suppliers is one of the most marked developments of the world mango market.

There is nevertheless still a hope that the season can operate under satisfactory conditions. It is surprising to observe the ingeniousness of trade operators in some countries in finding solutions to problems for which the authorities are helpless. We shall report again in mid-March! ■

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