

## Air-freight pineapple

### Is the reign of Cayenne on the air-freight market over?



It would seem that the many, excessively frequent quality concerns over the African Cayenne supply have ended up not only aggravating lack of purchaser interest in the fruit, but also ushering in air-freight Sweet exports. Operators are now no longer hesitating to promote air-freight MD-2, since it meets all the quality and reliability conditions that purchasers are entitled to expect from a niche product.

In view of the pineapple volumes taken in by the European market, the air-freight supply remains a fairly narrow niche market (less than 0.5 % of the sea-freight pineapple imports). This niche market was hitherto dominated by the Smooth Cayenne variety, mainly exported by African origins (Benin, Cameroon, Ghana and Guinea). It then had to get used to the increasingly strong presence of the Sugarloaf, the supply of which from Benin, Ghana and Togo gradually gnawed into the Cayenne market shares.

The reorganisation of the face of the air-freight pineapple market does not seem to be finished, since the Sweet supply, which hitherto made just a few incursions, now seems set to establish a more regular presence. The numerous quality concerns and lack of reliability of the African supply helped the Central American professionals (Costa Rica, Cuba, Panama, Dominican Republic) to promote well-packaged standardised products, which also gained market share at Cayenne's expense, with the latter variety seemingly suffering from growing disaffection among purchasers. Africa is not to be outdone in this niche, with Ghana also trying to take position.





## A taste of the exotic

Greenyard Fresh France is an important player in the production, packaging, export, storage, ripening and distribution of fresh fruit and vegetables. All these services are carried out to ensure the quality and natural flavour of the fresh produce.

With diversified production, constant supply and varied origins, Greenyard Fresh France offers you the exotic taste of pineapple all year round.



### Greenyard Fresh France SAS

15, boulevard du Delta / Zone Euro Delta DE1 / 94658 Rungis Cedex / France

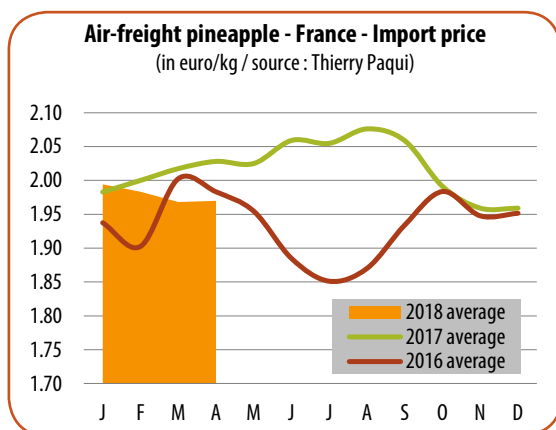
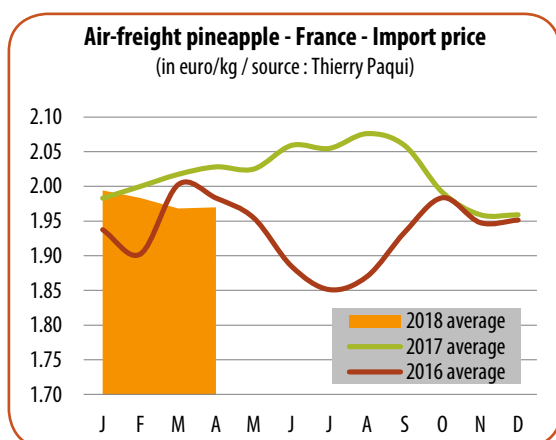
T +33 1 49 78 20 00 / F +33 1 46 87 16 45 / [contact@greenyardfresh.fr](mailto:contact@greenyardfresh.fr)

[www.greenyardfresh.fr](http://www.greenyardfresh.fr)

*for a healthier future*

It is their professionalism which has enabled the Central American operators to explore and profit from the air-freight supply despite the high freight costs. It remains fairly limited for the moment, representing a niche within the niche. Operators importing Central American Sweet are aware that the resale price of these fruits contributes to limiting mass access. African producers of Cayenne and Sugarloaf should seize this opportunity to reflect on the expectations of their customers in terms of quality, reliability and packaging, if they want to retain and safeguard their market share.

From week 40 2017 to week 17 2018, demand was often weak and the African supply fairly irregular in terms of quality. Throughout October and November, demand was lethargic, the autumn school holidays doing nothing to help improve market conditions. Faced with fairly irregular demand, operators often struggled to sell the fruits in their possession. Several batches sold on a post-sale price (PSP) footing. To relieve the market, several operators opted to considerably scale back their pineapple imports. Unfortunately, despite these falling volumes, sales remained poor. It is true that the heterogeneity of quality provided by certain brands from Benin and Cameroon did not help improve demand.



Despite demand remaining flat in December, operators nonetheless managed to sell their stocks, thanks in particular to the promotions in place. The usual increase in the supply two weeks prior to Christmas however very nearly went wrong. It was only just before Christmas that demand manifested itself. Although it came late, it was nonetheless highly dynamic and was able to absorb nearly all the fruits available, and at fairly high rates. For the operators, the increasingly late start of festive purchasing makes management of these fruit influxes at Christmas a little more complicated, since they cannot take the risk of scaling back their imports during this period.

During the end-of-year holidays, demand for Sugarloaf was higher. The supply remains split between yellow-orangey fruits and green fruits. The coloured supply from Ghana and Togo was able to take advantage of the paucity of the overall Beninese supply to earn better value. The simultaneous presence of these two supplies (coloured and green) is continuing to foster confusion among customers, who seem to prefer coloured fruits.

In anticipation of a fall in demand after the holidays, the operators considerably scaled back their imports over the first month of 2018. Despite that, sales remained fairly quiet

From the beginning of the year, progressive disaffection was observed among purchasers for Cayenne, which often exhibited quality flaws (rapid development, internal spots). So demand switched to the Sugarloaf and Sweet supply. Primarily, it was Sugarloaf sales which benefitted most. Given the growing lack of interest in Cayenne, several wholesale market operators questioned the point of continuing to import this fruit, or at least importing such large volumes.

At Easter, demand was not as high as the operators hoped, the lack of fruit coloration not helping to improve demand either. Conversely, Sugarloaf sales were steadier, earning better value for coloured fruits than green fruits across the three origins supplying the market.

The Sweet supply topping up Cayenne and Sugarloaf remained limited, but sold at stable prices, which fluctuated between 2.20 and 2.40 euros/kg, with some occasional peaks at 2.50 euros/kg when the supply was smaller than usual. The quality and presentation of the Central American Sweet supply is increasingly tending to foster purchaser loyalty, with an apparent readiness to pay extra for products of reliable quality ■

Thierry Paqui, consultant  
paqui@club-internet.fr



## Beninese pineapple Not such a winning return...

Given the difficulty of Beninese pineapple producers in meeting the ethephon residue rates for Sugarloaf, the Beninese authorities took the decision to ban all exports of coloured pineapples. This ban, which lasted nearly nine months, ended in August 2017. Unfortunately, while the residue problems were resolved, the procedures in place for export controls now seem to be creating new problems, which bit by bit seem to be side-lining the Beninese pineapple. The decision by the Beninese authorities to ban coloured pineapple exports no doubt caught the operators short. As laudable as it might have been, this decision has remained for many incomprehensible in more than one sense, making no distinction between exports of Cayenne and Sugarloaf. Yet while for Cayenne there is a procedure enabling risk-free ethephon applications, this was not the case for Sugarloaf at this point. On the other hand, this unilateral decision neglected the highly competitive environment of a highly competitive niche market such as the air-freight pineapple. Nor did it take into account that certain Beninese operators were supported by their importers, who also carried out tests prior to marketing the fruits.

True, the export ban on coloured pineapples will have had some positive impacts on the organisation and structuring of the Beninese pineapple industry, on fund allocations for industry development and for professional enhancement of the operators. Certain operators were able to obtain certifications (GlobalGap, organic).

The Beninese industry took advantage of the 2018 Fruit Logistica show, to communicate and explained all the work that it had accomplished within nine months to ensure that its pineapple exports no longer exceeded the ethephon rates set by European legislation. The central system set up in Benin to monitor ethephon residue relies on the Beninese Food Safety Agency (ABSSA). The official release ending the export ban for coloured pineapples specified that "all batches aimed at export must be accompanied by an official ABSSA validation stamp".

While upon the resumption of exports, ABSSA had seemed able to keep up with the tempo, it now



seems to have been left well behind by the number of exports and exporters to check, to the point that Cayenne which are not coloured or overly mature cannot be exported. Hence several batches were rejected by European purchasers due to overmaturity, which in recent months has increased the mistrust of the Beninese Cayenne. Today the Beninese supply is no longer prone to breaching the MRL, but is experiencing serious quality flaws. Indeed the analyses conducted by ABSSA are taking too long, and once the batches have been validated, they are already at an advanced stage of development. Beninese pineapple producers really seem to be caught between Scylla and Charybdis.

This situation certainly complicates winning back market share, already compromised by the presence of Sweet batches from various origins and by the increasingly strong attraction exerted by Sugarloaf.

We are reaching the limits of what the public authorities can do to help private companies. The ABSSA's controls are a god thing, but it is primarily up to the professionals to realise that it is in their interest to work their products better. More than ever it seems necessary today for the Beninese pineapple industry to really professionalise and better apply the procedures in order to ease the strain on ABSSA, otherwise its objective of winning back lost market share and even increasing it will remain a vain wish.