

# Litchi

## Mauritius

### Practically unnoticed

by **Pierre Gerbaud**



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**A**s with Reunion, this year Mauritius saw a considerable downturn in its litchi production, and therefore its export capacities. Estimated at around 80 to 100 tonnes, exports registered a distinct downturn from the previous year, which registered a total of nearly 250 tonnes. The 2016-17 campaign was particularly auspicious in terms of tonnages. The context in which the litchi marketing campaign unfolded on European markets did not favour Mauritius. The low export possibilities at the beginning of the campaign put a strain on the overall results for the season. Usually, Mauritius has a quick start to its campaign, with substantial volumes. This year, it took at least two weeks to reach the exports peak, which was at a very moderate level. Mauritius did not take advantage of the opening weeks of trading when the novelty of the product and its limited availability favoured good sales at high prices. Furthermore, the relative rarity of the product on the markets led to particularly high pricing. At the retail stage, prices put off many consumers, who preferred to defer their purchases in favour of sea-freight fruits. From week 47, marketing of fresh litchis proved more difficult, leading to poor sales and storage. From weeks 48 to 50, sales were observed at lower prices for fresh on-stem litchis or trussed litchis of deteriorated quality (6.00-8.00 euros/kg as opposed to 12.00-15.00 euros/kg). Mauritius mainly exported on-stem or trussed fruits. Exports of treated destalked fruits were limited to weeks 47 and 48. Competition from Madagascan, South African and Mozambique litchis in this niche meant that Mauritian fruits went practically unnoticed. Prices of fresh fruits remained higher than for destalked fruits, which probably led Mauritian exporters to favour this type of product. While destalked Mauritian fruits were deemed of decent quality, on-stem and trussed fruits were highly rated in the main, with the inspectors highlighting the size of the seeds, their coloration, presentation and taste quality. With every passing campaign, Mauritian exporters are improving the presentation of their produce. The systematic adoption of effective packing bags, but also trussed presentation, imitated by Reunion's professionals, are earning value for the export fruits, by meeting the changing demands of European supermarkets. In the competition between the Indian Ocean origins, Mauritius is hot on Reunion's heels in the fresh fruits niche, yet remains more discreet in terms of volume. The extension of the orchards is limited and the logistics complex, given the competition from other products, in food and other sectors, exported by Mauritius, restricts the freight capacities assigned to litchis at the end of the year ■

