

## New Cherry Time facility to help ship seasonal harvest

Cherry Time has invested in a new packing and handling facility for its main operations in Ceres in the Western Cape. The 5,000m<sup>2</sup> facility is equipped to pick, pack, and ship six million kilogrammes of cherries seasonally.



Source: Cherry Time

The air-conditioned building features three hydro-cooling systems and a fully automated Unitech packing machine that can process eight truckloads of cherries daily.

It also houses 45 high-definition cameras that take 15 pictures of each cherry from three angles to determine the exact size, shape, colour, and stem length. In addition, the cameras can pick up the tiniest defect and accurately determine the texture of the cherries.

The new facility also ensures that no human hands need to touch the cherries again after picking them off the trees which is said to be gentler on the fruit and results in fewer defects and damage.



Source: Cherry Time

## Extended harvest

The facility will be especially beneficial this season, coinciding with the cherry producer's extended harvest in January 2023, says Gysbert du Toit, head of marketing, DuToit: "The disadvantage of extending the harvest season is that there are only a few orchards left, which leaves an even smaller margin for error. Thankfully, our new facility will ensure our cherries hibernate adequately enough to maintain this precious fruit's integrity and reduce the likelihood of spoilage," adds Du Toit.

Cherries are non-climacteric, which means they don't ripen after they've been picked from the trees, unlike bananas and apples. So, this fruit must be harvested tree ripe, measured to ensure it's the right colour, size, and sugar level, and transported to the cold room facility as soon as possible.



Source: Cherry Time

## Climate change challenge

Adding to this challenge is global warming, which has seen regional temperatures increase and rainfall patterns change, such as uncharacteristic rain in early spring and late summer across Cherry Time's Western Cape farms.

"The severity of rain has been significantly higher in the past few years, harming our delicate cherry fruit. Too much rain causes the cherries to crack on the trees.

"While cherries are easy to love, they are not effortless to grow. So, we must continue to take every measure to protect our delicate stone-sized fruits, from when they're flower buds to when we pick and ship them to our customers for their enjoyment," concludes Du Toit.

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