

Brazilian Orange Juice Sales to US Jump with a Little Help from Hurricane Wilma

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Brazilian orange juice exports may grow as much as 50% this year, thanks to hurricane Wilma, which hurt production in Florida, in the United States (US), according to the president of the Brazilian Association of Citric Fruit Exporters (Abecitrus), Ademerval Garcia. Brazil is the world's largest producer and exporter of orange juice.

"The United States is the second largest producer of oranges, but they suffered four hurricanes last year, which represents a big break in their production. This sequence of climatic events there winds up producing a greater demand for Brazilian orange juice. Brazil is the only country capable of supplanting the United States in terms of quality, quantity, and velocity to produce the surplus they require," Garcia affirms.

According to Garcia, orange juice sales rose 50% in 2003 and 2004. "This year we did not expect to repeat last year's performance, but with what has just happened, it is possible that we will maintain last year's level. Which represents something on the order of US\$ 230 or US\$ 250 million."

He went on to say that the desired increase in juice exports will not influence the price of the product on the domestic market, because the country has adequate reserves.

Garcia, who is a representative of the exporters, emphasized the importance of technological investment in orange production.

"Ten years ago, 1% of the area was irrigated; now we have 15%, which represents a very solid scientific investment. I would say that there is a balance between science, technology, demand, agricultural technique, and very sophisticated commercial investment in the Brazilian orange sector at this time."

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