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When Makoto Yaguchi visited Tokyo last December he saw a familiar sight.

Television commercials were rhapsodizing about the benefits of Tropicana fruit juices, in Japanese, of course.

Yaguchi, a Japanese agricultural representative in Tampa, decided to try some. But he couldn't find any Tropicana orange juice in stores, so he bought grapefruit juice instead.

He didn't like it.

"The quality of Tropicana juice wasn't as good there as the grapefruit juice sold here" in the United States, he said. "It was too weak, too watery."

His wasn't the kind of reception that Florida's citrus exporters are expecting or hoping for from Japan. Japan and Europe, they say, will be the next great hope for the U.S. citrus juice industry. Tough times, markets

America's demand for orange juice has been flat to flagging in recent years as fewer people make time for breakfast. And industry prognosticators are warning of a worldwide glut in oranges and orange juice in the mid-1990s, further depressing prices.

"Chances are the real growth of orange juice and grapefruit juice sales will be in export markets . . . rather than in the U.S.," said Lee Bouldin, a marketing director for the Florida Department of Citrus in Lakeland.

"By the end of the decade we're estimating that the total Japanese and Western Europe market will be about the size of the U.S. (market) right now. . . . It's important timing to start developing these markets overseas now."

Beginning April 1, Japan will drop its limit on orange juice imports, a development expected to transform the trickle of orange juice there to a flood in a few years.

Europe, on the other hand, is expected to unify into a single market next January, making export among its 12 nations simpler and less costly, some exporters say. But the two markets present a formidable marketing challenge.

For instance, the Japanese and the Europeans don't consider breakfast a bacon-and-eggs meal and so don't associate orange juice with it. Orange juice marketers would have to sell orange juice like any other beverage.

Also, Florida orange juice is expected to be considerably more expensive than orange juice from other areas, especially from Brazil, which subsidizes its exports. Importers will have to trumpet the idea that Florida juice is superior to justify the higher prices. Currently, Florida provides only a fraction of the orange juice supplied to Japan and Europe.

"Going into a market such as Europe and Japan is not a simple, inexpensive process and not something you rush into," said Dan Schafer, spokesman for Coca-Cola's Minute Maid brand. "That's something you take a very long-term view on."

But in the long term, Japan and Europe still present a potential bonanza for Florida exporters, citrus industry sources say. Japan: Quality counts

Japan, for instance, is one of the world's richest and largest consumer nations, with 123-million people and a gross domestic product of more than \$2.9-trillion, in U.S. dollars.

(Gross domestic product measures the total worth of a nation's goods and services, but it excludes export earnings.)

In 1990, the Japanese consumed 50-million gallons of orange juice. Only 14 percent of it, or \$18-million worth, came from Florida. By 2000, Japanese demand is expected to reach 200-million gallons of juice, with 30 percent coming from Florida and generating \$150-million in revenue for exporters, the Florida Department of Citrus predicts.

"The Japanese are fanatical about quality," said Myron Roeder president of Tropicana's International Group. "They're willing to pay for our products if we're willing to deliver on quality." Orange juice processors, large and small, are expected to capitalize on the newfound market, Bouldin said. Florida has 27 commercial processors. "Japanese bottlers will demand a high volume of orange juice, so it shouldn't be only the largest Florida processors that have access to the market," Bouldin added. "Most, if not all, of the processors in Florida will have some role in this."

Tropicana, the largest processor in Florida, has been at the forefront. In January 1991 it formed a joint venture with a Japanese bottling company, Kirin Brewery Co., and has been shipping frozen concentrated juice to be reconstituted and bottled in Japan.

Next April, Tropicana will ship fresh juice under its Pure Premium label, Roeder said. "As of today we have the leading brand name recognition in Tokyo," he said.

Nevertheless, few Japanese people are familiar with fresh orange juice. The closest thing to it has been Mikan juice, from a type of mandarin orange. It produces a sweet, thicker juice, Roeder said.

Another hurdle with Japanese consumers is they don't usually like tart drinks with their typical breakfasts of rice, vegetables and fish. If they drink citrus drinks, it's usually after exercise or between meals, Yaguchi said.

But already, there is enough demand for orange juice that most Japanese juice importers have contracts for Florida orange juice shipments.

"All the main Japanese bottling, beverage and dairy companies have introduced or are introducing a 100-percent Florida product," Bouldin said. Europe: Price hurdles

Europe will not be eclipsed, however.

The Common Market encompasses 380-million consumers, spread from the Arctic Circle to the Mediterranean. Its gross domestic product is a huge \$6-trillion, twice the size of Japan's and surpassing the United State's \$5.4-trillion.

Florida exporters have more experience in Europe because it has always been an open market. For decades, Florida grapefruit and oranges have crowded into Europe's markets and grocery stores.

Some orange juice also has made it into Europe, though not in great quantities and not much during the freeze years.

In 1990, for instance, Europeans consumed 500-million gallons of orange juice, with only 5 percent of that, or \$50-million worth, coming from Florida, according to the Department of Citrus.

By 2000, Europe will consume a billion gallons, with 20 percent or \$400-million worth coming from Florida.

"We have a real opportunity abroad to expand and put some real tonnage of fresh fruit and juice in there," said Jim Russakis, a Fort Pierce grower. "We're not in Germany at all."

Added Bouldin, "European consumers, while not real experts on citrus, have very favorable images of Florida."

Some importers have taken advantage of that, to the detriment of Florida exporters, said Jacques Bobbe, a citrus and beverage exporter in Casselberry, near Orlando. He said when he travels to France, he regularly sees Florida signs over cheaper fruit and juice from other countries.

"My distributors are upset" because they can't compete, he said.

But there's enough European market to go around.

The 100-percent orange juice market is growing at an annual rate of 8 percent, Bouldin estimated.

Europe's economic unification next January will only reduce transportation and marketing costs among the countries. So exporters like Tropicana, which have a presence in one European country, can ship from a single company instead of having to form individual companies to serve each country, Roeder said.

"Our intention is to expand (in Europe) in a very professional way," he said, "by making sure that we have a clear brand leadership in each market. So, we're slower but better."

Tropicana, which is owned by Seagram Cos. Ltd., has been in France for nearly 20 years. Last year it expanded into the United Kingdom and Canada.

"It's already beginning to become significant," he said.

"We have very little doubt that in the future, export markets will be just like the U.S."

Half of Seagram's sales come from beverage and alcohol exports, he added.

Citrus Hill, on the other hand, is expected to stay stateside because its parent company, Procter & Gamble, makes its own brands of orange juice in West Germany. P&G's Punica and Valencina brands are blends of available oranges from several countries, said Jim Waller, manager of fruit procurement at Citrus Hill Manufacturing Co. in Frostproof.

"In our last report they were the market leaders in Germany," he said, although he did not have specific sales figures.

Last spring P&G bought an East German juice company and it plans to expand orange juice production there, he said. It already has forged distribution into the Netherlands and Belgium.

But there are impediments along the way: Brazil, the world's largest orange harvester, continues to dominate in Europe, as well as Japan, with cheaper products. Once again, Florida orange juice will be the most expensive.

"As long as you're advertising good, quality fruit, they'll buy," said John Minton, a grower in Fort Pierce. But Waller said the Florida origin doesn't guarantee quality, especially because much of the orange juice exported to Japan and Europe is actually transported in concentrate form and reconstituted and repackaged there.

Add to that the fact that many Europeans don't have much refrigerator space, so 87 percent of the juices sold there are in shelf-stable bottles, said Schafer, of Minute Maid.

That's one of the reasons Minute Maid has stayed out of Europe, he said. Minute Maid is marketed as a chilled or frozen product in the United States.

Minute Maid, owned by Coca-Cola Foods Inc., sells orange juice in McDonald's restaurants around the world, but it has no plans currently to expand in Europe or Japan, he said.

Besides, industry estimates of doubling and tripling sales in Europe and Japan are way too optimistic, Schafer added. After all, each Japanese consumer drinks an average of four-tenths of a gallon of orange juice each year, and each European consumer drinks 1.5 gallons. Americans each consume 5 gallons of orange juice a year