Citrus Research International's approach was developed over four years

South Africa's systems approach to EU's new FCM regulations

The South African citrus industry has been preparing a systems approach to manage false codling moth for the past four years, in expectation of what has indeed come to pass: from 1 January 2018 false codling moth will be a regulated pest in the EU.

Dr Sean Moore of Citrus Research International presented information on the systems approach to delegates at a workshop on FCM and other citrus pests, near Groblersdal in the Senwes region, as part of a nationwide CRI roadshow on FCM.

“We can scientifically prove that the system we have developed will mitigate the phytosanitary risk and this approach is in line with the International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures of the FAO’s International Plant Protection Convention. It has been developed in conjunction with all stakeholders within the citrus industry. Apart from lemons, which are exempt from the regulation as a non-host for FCM, there will be no other way of exporting to the EU.”

Three exporting options have been developed for citrus to the EU. The default option, option C, includes four requirements: i) registration of each orchard, ii) orchard sanitation, iii) pheromone trap monitoring and iv) PPECB pallet inspection.

The other two options (A & B) have additional requirements back on the farm and in the packhouse. All fruit to be exported under the systems approach will have to be shipped under one of a new set of shipping conditions that relate to the systems approach.

FCM infested fruit (Photo: Dr Sean Moore)

The first of the Option A and B additional requirements is fruit infestation monitoring to determine the need for control measures. In an orchard, fruit infestation from one or more data stations (each consisting of 5 trees) must be monitored for at least twelve weeks before harvest. Exceeding a specified infestation threshold indicates the need to apply a registered treatment.

Four weeks before the harvest, the second requirement for Options A or B kicks in: fruit infestation is monitored to determine the export option. If the specified fruit infestation is exceeded, the fruit of that orchard can only be exported under option C.

Packhouse delivery inspection is the third requirement particular to export Options A and B. A sample of specified size must be inspected and exceeding specified thresholds means that the fruit from that orchard can only be exported under option C.

Orchard sanitation is an effective control measure and should be conducted weekly from early in the production season and continued until after the harvest.

FCM larva (Photo: Dr Sean Moore)

Dr Moore emphasises the importance of training everyone in spotting the signs of FCM in fruit, from those picking the fruit to do an initial pre-sorting check, to the sorters and graders in the packhouse. “Packhouse grading needs to improve dramatically. Train your people, give them good lighting and magnifying glasses. You can even consider incentivising them to spot fruit with signs of FCM infestation,” he says.

He also discussed two other valuable treatments that can be included in an FCM programme, the sterile insect technique and mating disruption.

Practical implementation of the systems approach will need to start in November and by the end of November all orchards meant for EU export have to be registered with the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF).

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