

CGA pushes system integration to enhance export opportunities

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As production in the citrus industry edge ups towards the 200 million 15kg equivalent carton mark, the Citrus Growers' Association has identified integration of diverse information platforms within the sector as a means of enhancing the industry's export opportunities.

The end goal, says logistics development manager Mitchell Brooke, is to have direct line of sight of product coming into the ports for export, with details of what product it is and where it is destined. Then on the export side it is to have line of sight of actual shipments with traceability to end destination.

Several of the information platforms have been created or developed by the likes of PPECB, Agrihub, eCert, Phytclean and Transnet – but each operates independently.

“At this point, information relative to production is largely collected from the PPECB, and export information is largely collected from Agrihub,” Brooke explains. “On the production side, the data collected from PPECB gives an indication of the production volume broken down mainly by variety, count size and area. The data gives a relatively accurate account of the packing flows but only about a week after the product has been inspected and approved for export.” The accuracy of the data information provided to

Agrihub is contingent on all loading facilities providing the organisation with the data – it's 99% there and the data is submitted to Agrihub on a daily basis for extraction.

“If the industry is to really monitor market supply and shipping optimally, there needs to be a way to track and trace product from source to destination on time and on a live end basis,” explains Brooke.

And what is apparent from the online data platforms that have been developed – or are in the process of being developed - by PPECB, eCert and Phytclean, is that the data integration can now potentially be developed for this purpose.

Recognising that information development is necessary to ensure the longevity and competitiveness of the industry, the CGA is in the process of procuring resources with the skill set needed to unlock this potential.

“The first order of business in this regard is to establish with the data companies their willingness and agreement to participate in this process,” says Brooke.

“Understandably there are hurdles to climb insofar as regulation governing information and competition is concerned. However the data sets that are required fall well within these parameters.”

There are several other spin-offs to be derived – for example monitoring the logistics chain's effectiveness and providing detail to enable better management of the export flows from the packhouses to the cold stores to the ports or terminals and then onto the ships and onward to destination.

“Other developments are being considered to enhance the exporter's ability to manage and control the shipping process from a central hub,” says Brooke. “In conjunction with this, Transnet Port Terminals (TPT) are moving forward with the development of what has been termed ‘Cargo Connect’. This system seeks to integrate all parties linked to the shipping (import/export) process to enhance the effectiveness of landside planning and operations. If TPT are successful in developing and rolling out this system, it could pave the way for much-improved productivity, simultaneously reducing bottlenecks and congestion.”

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