

Tomás Lucas & Reon Marx - Sanifruit Suidchem

South African citrus packhouses set to become Sanifruit's biggest market

Sanifruit, in its sixth active season in South Africa, has moved beyond packhouses in the Eastern Cape to Limpopo and Mpumalanga to help packhouses with some of their pain points: on the one hand, a resistance building to decades-old chemicals and on the other, a steady reduction in the allowed active ingredients and the allowed quantities thereof.

"In a number of packhouses in Limpopo and Eastern Cape they are starting to see imazalil's efficacy dropping as severe resistance develops, with no clear alternatives with a similar efficacy," explains Tomás Lucas, director of sales at Valencia-based Sanifruit. "Pressure is growing to reduce maximum residue levels and the number of active ingredients to meet the requirements from both the European legislation and retailers. Several traditional chemicals used in the packhouse, like imazalil and fludioxonil, will be banned by Europe in the next few years."

Lucas points out that it's not only European regulations that shape South African citrus exports. "In interesting new markets such as India, the use of thiabendazole is prohibited. Indonesia doesn't allow pyrimethanil while Korea and Japan have imposed extra restrictions on the use of some of the post-harvest chemicals like imazalil."

Lucas and Reon Marx, business development manager of Suidchem, Sanifruit's distributor in South Africa, maintain that the use of Sanifruit's range of soaps, sanitizers and coatings reduce packhouse chemical use (as regulations instruct them to) which in turn allows for the extra use of actives in the spraying programmes in the orchards.

No surprise, then, that South Africa is one the biggest markets for Sanifruit's postharvest soaps, sanitizers and coatings on citrus fruit, which they aim to extend to packhouses in neighbouring countries by next year.



"Very powerful tools to reduce food waste"

Sani D is among the most-used of their products in South Africa: a surface sanitizer formulated with potassium sorbate and applied to drenchers before degreening as well as to the packline's fungicide bath. It has no effect on pH levels.

"An extra advantage of using our sanitizers is that we can reduce the number of chemicals normally used in the packhouse, which results in lowering the MRLs," he says. "Sani D has demonstrated very good control of pathogens in the packline. Some diseases such as sour and brown rot and sooty mould have become a concern over the last few years, causing big losses not only in the arrivals but also in the packhouse after degreening."

He remarks that food waste – and not only in fresh produce – is in his opinion one of the major challenges of the near future. "Sani D and Sani C are proven to be very powerful tools to reduce the waste of fruit whether in the packhouse or on arrival."

Chilling injury avoidance through vegan coatings

Traditional polyethylene shellac waxes are neither vegetarian nor vegan (as a matter of fact, from the start of this year the UK's Vegetarian Society no longer approves products containing shellac) and the industry needs to adapt.

The coatings offered by Sanifruit are not wax-based, but composed of sucrose esters of fatty acids which are both vegan and edible (as long as postharvest

fungicides are not added), and when the registration process in the EU is completed, will be certified organic too.

"Since the pandemic, the logistical scenario has only slightly improved. Therefore, there is a need to guarantee that fruit has a longer shelf to accommodate the longer shipping periods which we encounter these days." To address this, their coatings minimize weight loss from the fruit and extend its shelf life.

"There is a big need to avoid chilling injuries during cold storage and other skin-related issues, like soft fruit on pomelos or pectin on lemons. Organic growers are investigating the use of Sani RC L (formulated with plant extracts, it has organic certification) to protect fruit against chilling injury. It is also highly recommended for unwaxed lemon programmes."

Many packhouses use all three - the soaps, sanitizers and coatings - at different points of application, which is Sanifruit's recommendation for very good fruit protection of fruit while simultaneously reducing MRLs.

"We can guarantee that Sanifruit products will help South African packhouse managers to sort out some of their concerns," Lucas says.



For more information:

Reon Marx

Sanifruit Suidchem

Tel: +27 82 614 9420

Email: reon@suidchem.co.za

<https://sanifruit.com/en/> (<https://sanifruit.com/en/>)

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Author: Carolize Jansen

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