

Excellent Participation at 2018 CRI Postharvest Workshops by All Postharvest Role Players

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The 2018 Citrus season was off to a good start with the very popular CRI Postharvest workshops held at six different citrus producing regions across South Africa.

The talks covered the full spectrum of issues that concern citrus fruit exports, starting with feedback from PPECB, and input from DAFF on current export regulations and phytosanitary inspections. Pre-harvest orchard requirements and packhouse treatments followed, before focusing on the critically important FMS (False codling moth Management System), market access and concluding with transport logistics and packaging requirements for export.



MC Pretorius

Each workshop kicked off with area specific feedback from an area representative with regards to postharvest issues experienced the past season. At the KZN-Swaziland workshop, the gap between old and new generations of packhouse managers was pointed out. The advice given to everyone was that as technology advances, we must never forget the basics.

PPECB presented feedback from the 2017 citrus season showing how the industry has grown compared to the previous year. South Africa exported 118 million cartons vs. 105 million cartons in 2016. Despite a few consignment rejections by PPECB and the ever increasing market restrictions, the citrus industry continues to flourish. DAFF followed by giving details on export market segments available, special market requirements and restrictions in place for these markets in the upcoming season.

Once the inspection and regulation processes were understood by all, the logistics of citrus exports were explained, with a warning that the logistical systems will be under strain during the coming years as the amount of citrus being exported is predicted to keep on rising.

Following the logistics talk, a more practical approach was adopted, starting with the necessary

orchard practices to be considered 4 weeks prior to harvest with focus on sour rot and brown rot. Next, the importance of monitoring and control of fruit fly and false codling moth in orchards as the fruit moves through the final stages of maturation, was discussed. The session concluded with a talk covering water sanitation at stages both before and within the packhouse. The different sanitising options, including properties of each, were also covered.

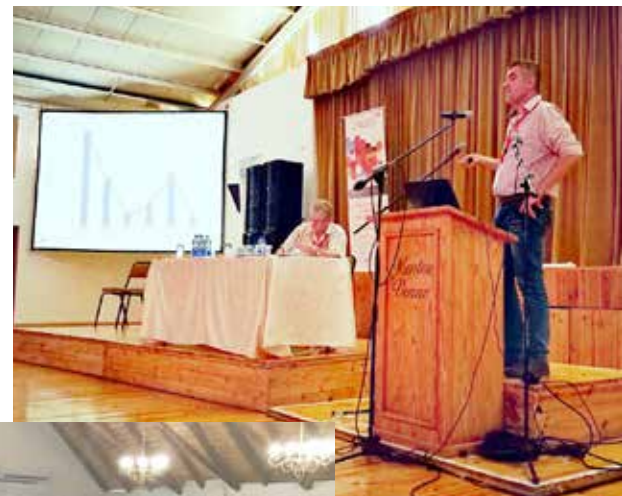
The second session focused primarily on packhouse treatments. The pre-packhouse drench was discussed, highlighting that South Africa is unique compared to postharvest requirements in other citrus producing countries. Throughout the session, each application in the packline was addressed, namely, the entry point and sanitation of citrus fruit into the packhouse, aqueous application using the fungicide bath or the in-line drench (flooder), and waxing. Focus was drawn to the necessity of packhouses doing their own quality tests and applying the required chemicals properly. During the session, first-hand experience with "automatic" dosing systems was discussed, and a new instrument to test fungicide residues at the packhouse was introduced. The session concluded with a talk on packaging and pallets, indicating the specifications and requirements for each, in order to comply with citrus export standards.



Keith Lesar



Above: Dinner and drinks after the first day of talks concluded, allowed delegates to socialise.



Above right: Clint Mac Aleer, general manager at Wicklow Citrus, sharing his research on implementing the FMS system.



Right: Delegates at the Tzaneen workshop.

The second day started with a very important session with specific focus being on the FMS, which packhouses need to strictly adhere to for fruit exported to Europe. Compliance with the FMS using the PhytClean data management system was discussed in detail. This included the correct procedures and documents required for exporting citrus to Europe, as well as adequate lighting and equipment needed in the packhouses for grading of the fruit. Practical experiences and results of a study on FCM monitoring in the orchards and packhouse according to the FMS concluded the session. The presentations during this session were

delivered in detail and although overwhelming for some, it was of utmost importance to safeguard citrus exports to Europe.

The final session included a talk on cooling, chilling injury and rind defects within the guidelines of the FMS. This is of particular importance to those packhouses exporting citrus at mandatory, cooler temperatures. During this session, the latest updates on consumer assurance concerning the MRL requirements for respective citrus special markets were shared. The final talk of the workshop was to inform packhouse managers of the potential benefits of a dedicated packhouse forum and to encourage establishment and participation in forum meetings in the different packing regions. The Sunday's River Valley recently pioneered such a forum for packhouses. The Packhouse Forum meets once a month when possible and information is shared concerning the packing and export of citrus. By moving away from the mind-set of keeping "industry secrets" and by working together as a production region, packhouses are able to help

each other overcome seasonal challenges ensuring the marketing of a superior product from the area. The initiative was recognised, and has taken off in other areas. CRI strongly supports this initiative and attempts to attend these meetings.

Over 1200 delegates attended the workshops, which makes it an excellent platform for CRI to share practical information to all post-harvest role players, as well as for sponsors, packhouses and other role players to interact. CRI would like to thank the main sponsor, Citrosol, for their sponsorship for the 5th year running, CRI also extends their sincere thanks to ICA as platinum sponsor for their continued support, as well as to the gold, silver and bronze sponsors. The standard of these workshops, to which citrus producers and packhouses are accustomed to, could not be possible without the support of these sponsors (see slide left).

