



CRI Postharvest Workshops: 2019

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In January and February 2019, CRI hosted the annual Postharvest Workshops across South Africa. The workshops drew over 1200 delegates and covered relevant topics pertaining to preparing packhouses, and other postharvest role players, for the 2019 citrus season.

Every year the CRI Postharvest Workshops are held in or near all the main citrus regions, with this year's in Tzaneen, Groblersdal, Nelspruit, Durban, Jeffrey's Bay and Paarl. Similar presentations were given at each workshop to update packhouse managers and their staff, consultants, chemical suppliers, packaging material manufacturers, service providers, and various other role players on the latest research findings, recommendations and relevant information to ensure compliance with export regulations and market requirements.

At each workshop, the opening talk was presented by an area representative that provided feedback on the past season's experiences, and expectations for the coming season, in that specific area. With this insight, a "helpful information" theme was established. Hoppie Nel, former chairman of the CRI board,

continued on that line and gave a breakdown of costs involved in packing and logistics, followed by a presentation from Productivity SA on improving productivity. The next presentation dealt with the potential loss of imazalil as a postharvest treatment for fruit destined for the EU. At the workshops CRI had the opportunity to warn the industry and discuss strategies to deal with the challenge and avoid a potential crisis situation. This was followed by presentations on pre-harvest practices four weeks prior to harvest that will have a major impact on market access and the quality of the picked fruit.

As in previous years, the format of the second session followed each of the key operational points in the packhouse. The theme was very clearly "sanitise" as that is the most powerful tool to prevent infection. This is more important than ever in light of the

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Below: Delegates at the KZN workshop.



imminent MRL reduction for imazalil. Industry representatives were asked to present topics in their field of expertise, and CRI staff shared their experiences from research findings and packhouse visits across the country. Lindo Mamba, the new CRI postharvest technician, presented key findings from his recently completed MSc degree at Stellenbosch University. From a practical application point of view the format and content in this session received many compliments, which makes it a growing success.

The second day started off with the concerning topic of “logistics”. Industry specialists from the CGA, shipping lines and port services were invited to talk on logistics developments and future alignment with increasing citrus export volumes. The audience utilised the opportunity to ask these experts questions during the panel discussion. Focus for the future is being placed on opening up of shipping lines to the Maputo port as a viable alternative to the Durban port for citrus exports, including the use of reefer trains as well as various other logistical developments. A key request came from the shipping lines, asking that the packhouses communicate any predicted high volumes, so that they can prepare accordingly and make sure they have supplied enough containers to the designated ports. Updates on packaging research was presented and packhouses were requested to make use of packing material that complies with the minimum specifications set by the Packaging Working Group.

In the fourth and final session, lessons learned from 2018 and changes to the False Codling Moth Management System (FMS) for 2019 were presented. Related to the FMS, feedback on cooling and chilling injury were discussed, as well as other physiological rind disorders. The session ended with a talk on strategies for handling low-chem treated fruit. Before closing, packhouses were urgently requested to share any research needs to ensure that research done by CRI is aligned to address the most burning postharvest issues. [Research needs can be sent to the National Extension Manager, Hannes Bester (hannesbester@cri.co.za)].

After each session, a panel discussion was held where delegates had a chance to ask questions. This year, a WhatsApp line was opened to receive questions from delegates and this initiative was well received, with many more questions compared to previous years. Sponsors and delegates had ample opportunities for interaction, especially during tea times and dinner. The dinner at each workshop was sponsored by the main sponsor, Citrosol, while the happy hour was sponsored by the platinum sponsor, ICA.

With more than 1200 delegates over the six workshops, the platform continues to be popular and informative. CRI would like to extend their sincere thanks and appreciation to all the sponsors whose contributions made it possible to hold such prestigious events.

