

CRI Postharvest Workshops: 2020

The 2020 citrus packing season began as usual with the very well attended CRI Postharvest workshops held across the country. The workshops are run during January and February, before most packhouses start packing, although some early lemons were already being harvested for export.

fruit journal
DIE JOERNAAL VIR DIE VRUGTEBEDRYF IN SUID-AFRIKA

The workshops were divided into four sessions where topics were grouped accordingly. This year the first session was opened with a welcome speech from our main sponsor ICA. The session also included area feedback by a representative from each of the main production regions. Quinton Coetzee gave an inspirational speech using the principles of the San people as an analogy between business today and the tough environment in which the San live.

Included in our opening session was an enlightening talk on the benchmarking of citrus packing, and an introduction to short courses at the Citrus Academy. The session ended with an update on the best harvesting practices to follow, in order to optimise the quality and shelf life of packed citrus.

Highlights from session 1:

- 1 Go back to basic principles to overcome challenges during difficult times, and to build a sustainable, competitive business in an ever-changing environment.
- 2 Packing costs are subject to many variables and differ from packhouse to packhouse. Participating in a benchmarking study is highly beneficial to address shortcomings in the cost chain; it also improves productivity and effectiveness in production and packing practices.

3 The Citrus Academy offers various three-day short courses that are extremely useful. Visit www.citrusacademy.org for more information, as well as relevant dates.

4 The cultivation of good quality citrus fruit starts in the orchard with good and well-managed orchard practices. Orchard sanitation (pruning deadwood and removing damaged and fallen fruit), harvesting at the optimum maturity, as well as careful handling (amongst other aspects) are all crucial to ensure that your fruit arrives in the overseas market in top condition.

The second session of the day covered the logistics and administration of packing and exporting citrus. We were very privileged to have representatives from CGA, PPECB, Fruit SA and CRI to guide us in these processes.

Highlights from session 2:

- 1 The port crisis is being dealt with as swiftly as possible, with CGA working closely with Transnet to resolve the issues. With citrus production in SA growing every year, 2020 may still be rough on the ports but upgrades have been scheduled to happen throughout 2020. Rail transport is looking very promising and may help to alleviate some of the congestion problems at the Durban port.



Sponsors displayed flags and sample equipment

2 South Korea special market costs may be reduced with increased exports and changes to the inspection process, while labelling was the most prominent reason for rejections (45%).

3 It is very important to follow the prescribed requirements for labelling and marking for all the special markets, since incorrect marking and labelling accounts for huge losses in special export programs.

4 The lower volumes of 2019 had a knock-on negative effect on the carton suppliers. Research into new technologies and products, as well as more cost-effective packaging is progressing well. The accreditation of carton manufacturers is highly beneficial to the industry and SAPPI has announced, once again that they will carry all the costs of testing cartons for the accreditation process.

5 PPECB is an integral part of the citrus industry and plays a critical role in various aspects, like conducting thorough and uniform container inspections to ensure that they are in proper working order before re-use.

6 eCertification is a compulsory change for the fruit industry, with citrus being the next crop to roll out on the system. The platform ensures that the entire certification system is paperless and therefore faster, easier and void of duplication.

For information, support and training, visit www.ecert.co.za.

The third session on day two focused on the practical aspects in the packhouse. CRI's postharvest research and extension team provided the latest research results and information. Guidelines were given regarding wax applications and the different types of waxes available to the industry. A packhouse representative from each region gave feedback on retention sample advantages and the management thereof.

Highlights from session 3:

1 Sanitation in the orchard and the packhouse can help break the disease triangle and control pathogens. This practice is crucial for chem-free packing and is without a doubt the basis for decay control in the supply chain.

2 Imazalil as the number one postharvest fungicide will still be available for the 2020 season and possibly much longer. Regardless, CRI's postharvest research team has been hard at work testing alternatives and some show real promise for future use.

3 New fungicides for postharvest control have been registered and can (if needed) be used as part of a resistance strategy in future.

4 Different waxes are available to the industry, and it is important to choose the right one for your market. Equally important is the need to ensure the proper application of the wax onto the fruit.



Left: Delegates applaud a presentation
Below: Delegates enjoying happy hour after
the first day's talks

Opposite page: Jeanine Hordijk from
Citrashine shares information on waxes
Opposite page below: Richard Robert-
son (left), Kobus Serfontein, and Wouter
Schreuder enjoy happy hour

5 Brush maintenance and correct use are crucial to getting the most out of your drying and waxing brushes.

6 Packhouses must start to think of how they will deal with their waste water as regulations may come into play soon.

7 Research into managing fungal growth on pallets is ongoing and showing promising results. However, of all the fungi isolated, none present any phytosanitary risks.

8 Retention samples are an important management tool.



CRI would like to thank all the delegates, speakers and sponsors for their participation and involvement. Any suggestions or comments on the workshops, as well as additional research and extension needs can be sent to Hannes Bester (hannesbester@cri.co.za).



The final session of the workshops contained one of the most important talks, which related to changes in the FCM Management System (FMS) that packhouses must adhere to for the coming season. As an industry we need to up our game to ensure FCM-free consignments, or face the risk of a cold-steri disinfection treatment being forced upon us. Other talks covered the protocols around cooling and rind conditions, including degreening.



Highlights from session 4:

- 1 FCM monitoring and management is ever more important, so a few improvements to the FMS have been introduced. The main improvements are:
 - a) Packhouses and exporters must agree to certain commitments in order to be registered under the FMS.
 - b) Only approved packaging suitable for proper cooling may be used.
 - c) Inspectors have stricter criteria for reporting the presence of FCM during orchard and packhouse delivery inspections.
 - d) Orchard monitors, packhouse delivery inspectors and on-line graders and sorters must be trained, evaluated and proven to be competent, and records of this must be kept.
 - e) Compliance audits of PUCs, PHCs and exporters by DALRRD will be triggered by an FCM interception in the EU, excessive FCM interceptions by PPECB, and risk profiling of the entity, potentially leading to corrective action.
 - f) A strike system is being implemented for FCM interceptions in the EU.

- 2 Degreening is a specialised practice and several steps must be followed in order to do it correctly and with as few as possible negative effects to the fruit.
- 3 Proper cooling is essential to manage FCM effectively under the FMS and to minimise chilling injury to the fruit. Research into proper cooling is ongoing with some good progress being made.
- 4 With the cooling requirements during export, chilling injury is a serious concern for many packhouses. A few changes in the way we treat fruit and the quality of the fruit exported may help in reducing the severity of chilling injury.
- 5 Monitoring systems will now be compulsory in order to manage the temperatures of the containers being exported. The implementation of cellular loggers fit easily into the current logging process.

The workshops concluded with instructions on how to access the FCM and fruit fly monitoring learning material and the competency course, prepared by the Citrus Academy and CRI. The video was played for all present to see and is available via the Citrus Academy website. ✿