

FROM THE DESK OF THE CEO (03/10)

Justin Chadwick (22 January 2010)

QUOTE OF THE WEEK *"I'm leaving because the weather is too good. I hate London when it is not raining"* Groucho Marx

UK FRUIT PROMOTIONS

It snowed in London for the first time ever last week!! Or so you would have thought by the fact that the country ran out of "grit" (a bit like their cricket side) and cars slid off roads left, right and centre. But the cold weather was offset by the warm atmosphere that surrounded the launch of the "beautiful country, beautiful fruit" campaign at the Dorchester Hotel in central London. This campaign is being funded by growers in the deciduous fruit sector, table grapes and grapefruit growers from the citrus stable. This follows a successful plum campaign in the UK in early 2009. Attending the launch were representatives from the South African fruit industries, importers in the UK, UK retailer representatives and the media. Stuart Symington gave a polished performance as MC, with excellent presentations from Stefan Conradie (Hortgro – formerly DFPT) and Johan van Niekerk (S A Table Grapes). There was an energetic buzz in the room, and high expectations regarding the outcome of the campaign.

The night before the launch RED Communications (who are running the campaign) held two market research sessions. The way the sessions work is that housewives are invited to a meeting to discuss their buying habits. Each of the groups had 8 housewives, the first group being aged 24 to 40 with kids at home, and the second being 40 plus with no kids at home. We (South African fruit industry representatives) observed the groups through one way glass. The following factors were important to me;

- 🍋 Every single person ate fruit every day, as did their kids. So we have a product that they do buy – we do not have to convince them on that. What we have to convince them is what to buy – that they select South African fruit.
- 🍋 They purchased fruit three or four times a week.
- 🍋 50% of both groups ate grapefruit – and they were passionate about it!! They could not think about starting the day without their grapefruit. I had always been under the impression that grapefruit buyers were in the age group over 60 years old – but here were relatively young housewives who love the product.
- 🍋 Very few knew anything about South Africa. They did not even know where Nelson Mandela came from! I have always been under the impression that South Africa would always be known for one thing at least – that it is the country of Nelson Mandela. That does not seem to be the case.
- 🍋 When shown pictures of the campaign – which are basically scenic pictures of Table Mountain, Garden Route, Blyde River Canyon, Twelve Apostles etc. the comment was "this is where we would expect good fruit to come from". When pressed as to why the groups mentioned the good climate and abundance of sun and water.
- 🍋 There was a request for more information about the source of the fruit – how was it produced, what development programs are the fruit industries busy with etc etc.
- 🍋 There was a concern raised about the carbon footprint, and how imported fruit could be detrimental to the environment through carbon emissions. However, they also insisted that they have certain fruit throughout the year, and acknowledged that they bought imported fruit when local was not available.
- 🍋 The only other citrus mentioned as a favorite in the two groups was Satsuma's.

We also attended tastings in Morrisons and ASDA stores. The tastings were for plums and grapes. It was interesting to note that a lot of people who tasted the fruit followed up by putting a punnet in their shopping baskets. The hope is that they have a good eating experience back home and that they remember to ask for South African grapes or plums in the future. Speaking to the buyers at both stores they did mention that certain categories of fruit were preferred by their country of origin – for example at this time of the year Florida grapefruit is preferred, and they will get queries regarding when it is arriving and what the stock position is. So if you can get your country of origin associated with a good eating experience for that particular type of fruit you become the preferred supplier.

Planning for the grapefruit campaign in the UK is well under way – if anybody would like a copy of a presentation covering what will be involved please send me a mail.

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