

# FROM THE DESK OF THE CEO (45/20)

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*"Imagination is the one weapon in the war against reality" Jules De Gaultier*

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## GLOBAL CITRUS CONGRESS

Wow **WOW** The Global Citrus Congress yesterday was a knock out. Over 1 200 delegates registered for the event – the highest attendance at any fresh produce virtual event to date. The event was the brain child of Fruitnet and the newly formed World Citrus Organisation. Seamlessly moderated by Chris White – delegates were treated to four hours of jam packed information on all things citrus. Simultaneous translation into Spanish meant that a wider audience was catered for.

The opening address from Eric Imbert was both concerning and encouraging. It was concerning in that it showed a sideways drift in volume of citrus traded in most markets and across most citrus categories. Admittedly the figures were up to 2019, and did not include the COVID 19 impacted (positively impacted) 2020 season. However, one year does not necessarily change the trend – and the trends are worrying. Encouraging in that the presentation showed that per capita consumption in many regions was lower than what could be considered "the norm". This immediately tied in with the third session on marketing; what can be done to stimulate consumers and drive them to the citrus category so as to get that per capita consumption towards "the norm"? The Hass Avocado Board presentation gave some pointers – although it was pointed out that this example dealt with one product (Hass Avocado) in one market (The USA). Nevertheless, there was a lot to learn from that excellent presentation. Closer to home we learnt about the Wonderful Citrus campaign in the US, the Spanish lemon campaign drive by Ailimpo, and the experience of San Miguel – an important player in many southern hemisphere citrus producing countries. All agreed that this topic needs closer attention – and that the World Citrus Organisation would be a good vehicle to bring all interested parties around a table to look at options and do the research. Such programmes need a few key ingredients – money, commitment, a good plan, a driving force (champions to sell the concept to the industry) and energy.

The northern hemisphere forecast for 2020/21 was shared with delegates – revealing a crop almost on par with 2019/2020. There are some swings within the categories; with soft citrus up and the other three down (albeit slightly).

The sustainability section showcased some real life examples of sustainability initiatives within the citrus industry. There is no doubt that all in the supply chain have their eyes on this topic – and it was good to get clarity on what aspects of sustainability are receiving attention, and how the presenters are facing up to the challenges. As a sector the citrus industry needs to ensure that it maintains an excellent standard in terms of sustainability – consumer's perceptions are their realities, if consumers perceive a product to be produced in an unsustainable manner (no matter where in the world) that entire product can get painted with the same brush and consumer resistance can follow (there are some good examples in the fresh produce world). All in the supply chain should strive for sustainability; and we should all hold each other accountable in this quest.

This Congress revealed a few things; it revealed that there is considerable interest in the citrus sector; it revealed that we as a global citrus sector can come together and share experiences, opportunities, challenges and opportunities; it revealed that we still have a lot to do if we want to grow the sector and keep demand ahead of supply. It revealed that the World Citrus Organisation is a catalyst for all of this – if you have not yet become a member please visit [www.worldcitrusorganisation.org](http://www.worldcitrusorganisation.org) For recordings of the Congress visit [www.citruscongress.com](http://www.citruscongress.com)

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