

“Another flaw in the human character is that everybody wants to build and nobody wants to do maintenance” Kurt Vonnegut

TZANEEN DAM SPILLS

Not too long ago the Tzaneen dam, which provides water to the large Letsitele growing region, was at less than 8% full. This past week social media was full of photos and videos of the dam spilling. Although growers must be overjoyed at the sight – one cannot feel that they will be a bit aggrieved (angry, spitting mad) at the incompetence of government who dropped the dam wall in order to increase the height; and then ran out of money to finish the job. This incompetence means that millions of cubic metres that could have been stored, has now been lost.

UK NO LONGER REQUIRES PHYTOSANITARY CERTIFICATES FOR SOUTH AFRICAN CITRUS

The UK stepped out of the EU on 31 December 2020 and is changing its Phytosanitary legislation to reflect its plant health priorities. One of those are that all countries are exempt from presenting a citrus Phytosanitary certificate [PC] for imports into the UK [including SA, Eswatini and Zimbabwe]. Both DALRRD and the CGA received verification from official DEFRA [Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs] letters. This move is welcomed.

This stems from the 10 plants & plant products chosen by the UK [under the Brexit agreement], to exempt from requiring a PC in future. All other plant and plant products require a PC [even coming from the EU – this is obviously new and replaces the EU Plant Passport which up to now was a relative easy requirement of EU internal trade]. For clarification, both Ireland and Northern Ireland remain in the EU SPS area, so subject to EU import requirements. The list of products that no longer need a PC is available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/importing-plants-fruit-vegetables-or-plant-material-to-the-uk#when-you-do-not-need-to-get-a-pc>

The UK's PC requirement comes into force on 1 April 2021 and the physical inspection commences in July 2021. The challenge will obviously be the initial period as all the arrangements are bedded down. So expect and cater for delays on the UK borders. Two issues to be aware of:

1] In the unlikely event that a dispute between the EU and UK results in the UK changing its requirement and citrus fruit again needs a PC, the CGA requested DALRRD retain the regulatory capacity, to issue EU compliance PC's for citrus fruit going to the UK.

2] The practise of SA exporters or buyers moving SA citrus fruit from the UK to the EU [e.g. should better paying options present themselves in the EU], after being duty cleared, will no longer be possible. This even if DALRRD has issued a SA Phytosanitary Certificate to verify the citrus fruit complied with EU import legislation. Naturally, SA citrus fruit can undergo a COD to the EU before being custom cleared in the UK, if it has been issued with an EU PC.

VARIETY FOCUS GROUPS (VFG)

Portia Magwaza (CGA Research Economist) was busy this week with the lemon, grapefruit and soft citrus focus groups all holding their meetings. A start has been made in the collection of crop estimates for 2021, which will be released at the Citrus Marketing Forum meeting scheduled for 17 March 2021. Next week (2 March @ 10h00) the combined valencia and navel (orange) focus group will meet.

WEEKLY STATISTICS

In most statistical sources pomelo and grapefruit are grouped into one category. China swamps this category (with pomelo production), with Mexico also producing pomelo. USA is the biggest grapefruit producer.

Pomelo/grapefruit production leaderboard looks like this (average 2015/16 to 2020/21): 1. China (4 755 000 tonnes); 2. USA (561 000); 3. Mexico (454 000); 4. South Africa (360 000); 5. Turkey (262 000).

Pomelo/grapefruit export leaderboard looks like this: 1. South Africa (249 000); 2. China (204 000); 3. Turkey (171 000); 4. USA (76 000); 5. Israel (61 000).

The largest pomelo producers consume most domestically – China exports 4% and Mexico 5%. South Africa exports 69% of production, Turkey 65% and Israel 42%.

THE CGA GROUP (CRI, RIVER BIOSCIENCE, XSIT, CGA CULTIVAR COMPANY, CGA GROWER DEVELOPMENT COMPANY & CITRUS ACADEMY) ARE SUPPORTED BY AND WORK FOR THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN CITRUS GROWERS