

GLOBAL CITRUS SCAN (1/2012)

John Edmonds (13 January 2012)



Citrus Growers Association (CGA)

U.S. authorities to test Brazilian orange juice imports

Brazilian orange juice producers are looking for an alternative to prevent black spot mold, following the decision by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) that carbendazim is an unlawful fungicide. Brazilian Citrus Growers Association (Associtrus) president Flávio Viegas, told *Globo Rural* the news was a big concern for producers as the U.S. consumes 200,000 metric tons (MT) a year, accounting for 14.5% of juice exports. "The work will be to find alternative products to meet the American market because the Brazilian citrus industry cannot produce fruit without the use of pesticides," he was quoted as saying. The FDA learned from a juice company that low levels of carbendazim were present in a competitor's marketed finished products, and in certain orange juice concentrates that were not in the market on Dec. 28 last year. The fungicide is not legally registered for citrus use in the U.S. despite the fact it is legally allowed in Brazil and major importing destinations such as the E.U., Japan and Canada. Brazilian Citrus Growers Association chief Renato Queiroz, told media agency Telesur that the FDA's decision was very unexpected. "It surprised us as an industry as they (the U.S.) participate in an integrated citrus program. They decide which products that can and cannot be utilized. Until now the industry has allowed the use of carbendazim for producers. That's why they (Brazilian growers) are surprised by this provision by the U.S." The FDA said industry reports showed carbendazim presence from juices produced from the 2011 Brazilian orange crop. An Environmental Protection Agency preliminary risk assessment concluded levels of carbendazim were too low to pose a safety hazard, stating there were no moves to remove the juice from supermarket shelves. However, the FDA's food safety director Nega Beru, said it would sample import shipments of orange juice for testing. "We are conducting our own testing of orange juice for carbendazim, and, if the if the agency identifies orange juice with carbendazim at levels that present a public health risk, it will alert the public and take the necessary action to ensure that the product is removed from the market."

[www.freshfruitportal.com; 13 January 2012]

US: Euro not biggest concern for grapefruit exporters

With the European continental currency falling in value and the financial stability of some markets on shaky legs, exporters to Europe are keeping a keen eye on what goes on there. But for many in the grapefruit industry, the value of the euro may not be the biggest factor in terms of how much fruit gets shipped. "Right now, market demand for our grapefruit exceeds what we can supply," says David Nixon of Seald Sweet. The main competition for grapefruit exports in Europe comes from Turkey, Israel and Spain, but European demand for the American fruit remains such that current supplies can't keep up. The reason many growers cite for this stem from shipping issues. "There's a multitude of issues that are creating the current situation where demand exceeds supplies," says Nixon. "There are shipping issues that stem from citrus canker regulations, and there's the issue of finding fruit that meet the specific demands of European regulations." Other markets are absolutely more attractive if we can ship to them and not have to worry about canker issues which, from a scientific standpoint, make no sense if the fruit's been treated." One leading exporter of citrus, Sunkist, doesn't export any grapefruit to Europe. "Asian markets have always been, and remain, our major export market for grapefruit," says Claire Smith of Sunkist Growers. With the dollar valued lower than the euro, American fruit enjoys a price advantage. But as the value of the euro decreases to match the dollar, that advantage could dissipate. In the meantime, however, American suppliers can't ship enough grapefruit to satisfy European demand.

[www.freshplaza.com; 12 January 2012]

Frost warning called for 30,000 hectares of citrus crops in Mexican state

The Mexican government has warned up to 60,000 hectares of citrus and sugarcane crops could be destroyed by frosts this month in the state of Tamaulipas. Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Rural Development and Fishing (SAGARPA) Tamaulipas delegate Roberto Salinas Salinas, told newspaper La Gaceta the concern has arisen as January and February are the state's coldest months. Temperatures dropped to -4°C (24.8°F) last year. He highlighted the central part of the state hosted 30,000 hectares of citrus crops, which were at risk if temperatures dropped below -4°C (24.8°F), the story reported. Salinas added that while oranges could resist some low temperatures, they could be damaged by freezing. He said citrus growers were planning for the cold weather with systems such as heat barriers installed to prevent orchard damages.

[www.freshfruitportal.com; 10 January 2012]

US (FL): Man steals \$25,000 in tangerines from citrus packing plant

Polk County Sheriff's detectives are searching for \$25,000 worth of tangerines and the man they claim stole the fruit from a Lake Hamilton packing plant. "You can't believe it," said Dundee Citrus Growers Association CEO Steven Callaham. "Our sales person calls and says, 'We've had a whole load of fruit stolen.' That just doesn't happen." According to Callaham, a truck driver came to pick up a load of 31,000 pounds of tangerines on Saturday, December 17. He was supposed to deliver the load to a grocery store in Wyoming. "Two days later, the customer calls and says, what happened to the fruit?" Callaham recounted. A call to the truck brokerage company that hired the driver eventually led to the discovery that he'd used false paperwork. Now, no one knows where he or the tangerines are.

[www.abccactionnews.com; 10 January 2012]

If you need more information on any of these issues, or if there is anything else that CGA can assist with, please contact us at 031 7652514, or johne@cga.co.za

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