

GLOBAL CITRUS SCAN (2/2012)

John Edmonds (20 January 2012)



Citrus Growers Association (CGA)

US (FL): Anger at EU refusal of grapefruit

US grapefruit distributors have accused the European Union of protectionism over its refusal to accept grapefruit from Florida groves that are not certified as being canker free. This is despite the fact that US research appears to demonstrate that canker cannot be spread by fruit as the cells die once it is picked and despite any affected fruit going straight into juice production. Dan Richey of citrus packaging company, Riverfront, said "The rest of the world accepts it. With the EU this is purely a stalling tactic and a non-tariff trade barrier." He suggested that Spanish competition was behind the EU's refusal... Last year Florida shipped 3.5 million cartons of grapefruit, worth \$49 million to the EU, which is down from an all time high of 9 million cartons annually. Mr Siddiqui said the bigger picture was not the export market itself, but the jobs that are dependent upon it. [palmbeachpost.com; 19 January 2012]

US: Citrus greening spreads

Citrus greening has been confirmed to have been found in a commercial citrus grove in San Juan, Hidalgo County, Texas, bringing to 5 the total number of states where the disease has been found to date. Dr Juan Anisco, a Texan agricultural expert said "It has always been a case of when and not if it would be discovered here." ...Material from citrus plants within the area has been placed under a 5 mile quarantine zone and people are being urged not to purchase stock that is not certified as being free from infection... The disease has most famously been found in Florida where it has caused many growers to sell their land and leave the citrus industry altogether. When it was first encountered in the state in 2006 many were concerned that it would spell the end for the industry. The future is still uncertain. Recently the insects which transmit citrus greening, *Candidatus Liberibacter asiaticus*, have been observed to display a very unusual behavioral trait that makes the spread of the disease even more likely. Most insects that spread bacteria such as this are capable only of spreading the disease they play host to from plant to plant. This particular insect however, has the dubious distinction of being able to spread the disease amongst its own species sexually during the mating process. This is likely to make the disease more virulent and easily spreadable. [www.freshplaza.com; 19 January 2012]

US (FL): Potential Breakthrough in treatment of bacterial disease in citrus

Scientists at Cornell's New York State agricultural experiment station may have found the solution to a deadly bacterial disease. They have engineered a tree that shows resistance to the Asian citrus phyllid... Currently the experiments have only been tried on tomato plants, but the engineering certainly appears to have made the leaves unappealing to phyllids. The researchers are preparing to test their finding on citrus trees just as soon as they receive the go ahead from authorities. [www.physorg.com; 19 January 2012]

Spain: "The worst citrus campaign of the century"

The president of Palmanaranja, Teodoro Revilla, said he was unhappy with the present citrus campaign and confessed that prospects for the sector are not that cheerful: "We face, what is by large, the worst campaign in the present century". According to Revilla, there was a drop in orange consumption in Europe by 30%, regarding previous years. The crisis is pointed as the main reason along with the drop in buying power by families, which are tightening their belts and reducing the amount of oranges they buy, despite the benefits (vitamin C) of this fruit in a diet. Moreover, Revilla points that the sector has to face another added problem - the pressure of big distribution chains. The president for the citrus association explained that "the commercializing companies, along with farmers, are being pressured constantly by big retailers, to drop prices, when production costs are higher and higher: water costs for irrigation, gasoline, logistics and raw and added materials (packaging materials for example) continue to go up day after day, making profitability for producers smaller by the day. Presently, prices in the field are not above 10 cents per kilo". [www.freshplaza.com; 19 January 2012]

US: Latest on Brazilian orange juice fungicide controversy

The controversy surrounding the use of the fungicide Carbendazim in Brazilian exported orange juice continues. Brazil has stated it will continue to use the chemical, used in the treatment of black spot, but banned in the USA, as the levels present in its produce fall within safe amounts... Florida growers are finding they are being affected by a drop in consumer confidence. Domestically produced orange juice is worth \$9 billion to the Florida state economy... the increased inspection on imported orange juice to the US is slowing the movement of Mexican juice into the country ... Critics of the FDA actions point out that, though carbendazim is prohibited in orange juice, it is considered acceptable in other juices such as grape and apple juice as well as in apples, bananas and apricots. Australia is also being affected by a slump in consumer confidence. Australia currently imports 300,000 tonnes per annum of Brazilian orange juice... Citrus Australia is using the problem to promote the use of locally produced citrus fruit pointing out that this is the best way to ensure that consumers avoid carbendazim. [www.freshplaza.com; 16 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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