

GLOBAL CITRUS SCAN (6/2012)

John Edmonds (16 March 2012)



Citrus Growers Association (CGA)

Mexican researchers look to yeast to extend citrus shelf life

Mexican researchers are studying a mix of chloride dioxide and sea yeast as a protective agent for citrus fruit cultivars, website Am.com.mx reported. Center of Biological Research of the Northeast (CIBNOR) experts are looking to the chloride dioxide to kill pathogens while the yeast would form a protective layer on fruit surface.

In particular, the yeast would guard against mildew and mold species, particularly *penicillium digitatum* and *penicillium italicum*. To achieve this the fruit would first be submerged or washed with the chloride dioxide to sterilize it and then passed through a hopper with water that contains the yeast, which is part of the *debaryomyces* genus. This process would allow the fruit to maintain longer during the cold storage and selling process. The work was started 10 years ago by the late Dr. Jose Luis Ochoa, but is still in a test stage and is not being used commercially yet.

[www.freshfruitportal.com; 1 March 2012]

Mexico: 70% drop in citrus production

"70% of the lime cultivation and 50% of oranges were lost, due to frosts registered in the last part of 2011 and later due to rain that caused the majority of fruits to fall from trees before they were ripe"...In the first months of 2012, losses could reach 70% of all municipalities, so they are asking for Government and Federation help, to face this coming crisis in the sector, since supports promised by the Government after the Jova contingency never arrived. It's estimated that more than 2,000 hectares have been destroyed, causing the price per kilo of citrus to reach 20 Pesos, although, it could keep on rising if the plague that is drying trees is not controlled...

[Ecosdelacosta; 13 March 2010]

UK: Genetically tweaked red oranges may provide health benefits

Scientists are looking into ways to turn ordinary oranges into blood oranges by manipulating their genes. The distinctive colouring of blood oranges is believed to have healthy qualities that orange oranges are lacking...Scientists have now identified the gene which makes the fruit red and how it is activated - which raises the possibility of being able to "switch on" its effects in other varieties. This would lead to a wider access of the benefits of blood oranges, which can only be grown commercially in Sicily currently as they require very specific climates. Professor Cathie Martin, who led the research team from the John Innes Centre in Norwich, said: "Blood oranges contain naturally occurring pigments associated with improved cardiovascular health, controlling diabetes and reducing obesity. "Our improved understanding of this trait could offer relatively straightforward solutions to growing blood oranges reliably in warmer climates through genetic engineering." ...A test batch of genetically created blood oranges is being grown now in Valencia. Speaking at a press conference in London, Prof Martin said: "Hopefully in the near future, seven years down the line, we will have blood orange varieties which can be grown in the major orange growing areas like Brazil and Florida..."

[www.dailymail.co.uk; 13 March 2010]

Morocco: Citrus exports decline 10%

The export season of fruit and vegetables from Morocco started up and down. First, the export started with very low prices. Second, adverse weather conditions slowed growth of fruit. "The cold snap of December-January-February has virtually blocked the development of the profile of the calibration of mid-season varieties and caused damage to oranges," says Ahmed Darrab, general secretary of the Association of Producers citrus from Morocco (Aspam). According to Darrab farmers turned more to the local market, because they received low prices in the previous seasons. In contrast, fruit and vegetable growers expect an average season. "Since March, the market has improved significantly thanks to a rise in prices", says Younis Zrikem, vice president of the Association of Producers and Exporters of fruits and vegetables (APEFEL). For tomatoes, flagship of the industry, they expect 400,000 tons, which is a record. In total, exports of citrus, fruits and vegetables, to March 5, reached 811,382 tons against 852,344 in the previous season at the same time a slight decrease of about 5%. The decline is attributed to the outputs of citrus whose volume stood at 380,260 tons as against 424,570 last season, down 10%. The decline is not expected to recover this campaign. According to the Secretary General of Aspam, total exports would not exceed 500,000 tons against the planned 570,000 tons and 530,000 tons in 2010/2011. "This, for an industry of around 1.8 million tons. The local market has a special appeal for good reason, it provides immediate cash for farmers, instead of waiting 4-5 months for regulations due for export."

[Freshplaza.com; 15 March 2010]

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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