

GLOBAL CITRUS SCAN (8/2012)

John Edmonds (30 March 2012)



Citrus Growers Association (CGA)

China: Scientists sequence orange genome

Chinese scientists have sequenced the genome of the sweet orange (*Citrus sinensis*), marking the first time that a Chinese research team has independently determined the genome sequence of a fruit crop...Breeds of citrus are among the most widely grown fruit crops in the world. The sweet orange, which originated in China, is the most commonly grown fruit tree in the world, and its production accounts for about 60 percent of total citrus production...Deng Xiuxin, an academician with the Chinese Academy of Engineering and leader of the research team...compared sequencing the genome of the sweet orange to opening the "black box" of the crop's life activities, a move that may help to improve the fruit's traits, including color, taste, yield, and disease resistance.

[www.asianscientist.com 28 March 2012]

US (FL): Spinach genes may strengthen against greening

Researchers looking for a solution to citrus greening disease have found strong potential from an unexpected source - spinach. Dr. Erik Mirkov, a Texas AgriLife Research plant pathologist at the Texas AgriLife Research and Extension Center at Weslaco, has transferred two spinach genes into citrus trees and this seems to have increased resistance to the devastating disease...Mirkov was aware that spinach proteins showed resistance against diverse bacteria and fungi, prompting him to test transgenic citrus trees for resistance. "We injected canker into the leaves of transgenic plants with one spinach gene and found that the bacterial lesions didn't spread," he said. "But we also showed that transgenic plants infected in the rootstock with citrus greening disease flourished and produced lots of leaves, while the non-transgenic trees produced just one leaf."...Now the tests are in their fourth generation stage and it is now that they will be taken through the lengthy - and expensive - deregulation process that will be necessary before the fruit they produce is declared safe to eat. "It's an expensive process that involves contracts with firms that do the actual testing with rats, bees, an aquatic invertebrate, maybe a songbird," he said. "It could take three to four years to complete, but it's important to determine that the fruit produced from transgenic trees are safe to eat, especially by what are considered at-risk groups, which include infants, the elderly and those with compromised immune systems."

[agrilife.org; 28 March 2012]

US (CA): Lemons down from last season

As several of California's lemon-growing regions wind down production, total output for the 2011-2012 season is anticipated to be down from last year. A dry year has also led to reports of smaller sizes in some areas. At the end of last year, the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service forecast 2011-2012 California lemon production at 832,000 tons. This represents an 11% decrease from last year. A portion of this decrease is due to fewer lemons in desert lemon-growing regions...Prices have been lower than in previous years, though decreased volumes of fruit helped strengthen prices as the season progressed.

[freshplaza.com; 27 March 2012]

US (TX): Texas grapefruit season ahead of schedule

With a year full of good quality fruit, the Texas grapefruit season is on the verge of wrapping up. Texas produces 17% of the nation's grapefruit supply. The USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service estimates Texas will grow 199,000 tons of fruit this season. The other major grapefruit-growing states are Florida and California, which account for 72% and 11% of the nation's supply, respectively.

US (FL): Grapefruit season to wrap up two weeks early

Due to weather that pushed up the grapefruit season in Florida, production will last for about two more weeks. This puts the timing of the season approximately two weeks earlier than usual. Doug Bornique, of the Indian River Citrus League, pointed out that the weather from as far back as 2010 has had an effect on this year's season..."The exceptionally cold weather in December of 2010 affected the timetable for the season," he said. "The season started about three to four weeks early, and we're going to finish in about two weeks, which is about two weeks earlier than usual." ...Production for the state is anticipated to reach 20.1 million boxes. That figure represents a slight rise from last year's production of 19.8 million boxes. Fresh shipments are expected to reach 8.1 million boxes, up 400,000 boxes from last year.

[freshplaza.com; 26 March 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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