

GLOBAL CITRUS SCAN (14/2012)

John Edmonds (11 May 2012)



Citrus Growers Association (CGA)

Mexican scientists discover yeast antidote to citrus mold

Mexican scientists have developed a yeast-based biological system to combat post harvest fungal disease, extending a lemon's lifespan by at least three weeks, website Informador.com.mx reported. Instituto Politécnico Nacional (IPN) researchers, at the Center for Biotechnology Genomics, experimented on lemons using yeast to inhibit the spores of green mold, *penicillium digitatum* fungus, a principal decomposition agent of produce in stores. Dr Claudia Patricia Larralde Corona explained bacteria and fungi coexist naturally in different citrus varieties emitting spores which penetrate the fruit following micro-injuries through harvesting and transport. "Fungi are looking to feed on sugars from the fruit and grow up around them. However, this technology uses yeast to compete with the fungi *penicillium digitatum*, both for nutrients and for space on the fruit, with the yeast gaining control," he was quoted as saying. He said yeast was easy to grow and once applied on the peel meant mold spores had no chance of entering the fruit. Larralde Corona said his fungal biocontrol system was an alternative to chemical treatments, which can cause respiratory or neurological disorders, allowing fruit to be accepted more easily in countries with rigorous chemical controls. It's estimated between 20-70% of Mexico's citrus is lost in storage due to fungal diseases.

[www.freshfruitportal.com; 8 May 2012]

Pakistan: Steps needed against greening

Citrus greening was the topic of discussion at a two Citrus Growers' Conference' organised by the Institute of Horticulture Sciences of the University of Agriculture Faisalabad in collaboration with Australia-Pakistan Agriculture Linkages Programme II. The inaugural session was presided over by UAF Vice-Chancellor Professor Dr Iqar Ahmad Khan. Project Leader Dr Tahir Khurshid was the guest on the occasion. The vice-chancellor said the disease was a serious threat and needed to be dealt with urgently. He pointed out that traditional agricultural methods and lack of investment already meant that Pakistan produced lower citrus yields than other countries. Greening, he said, had the potential to make things worse. He pointed out that although the average citrus tree had a lifespan of 40 years, the disease was killing several trees per year in most orchards. He praised Australia for the way it was helping to handle the country's struggle against the disease, especially the work carried out by ASLP, which was improving nursery practices and extending the marketing season. At the same time though, he pointed out the differences between the two industries - Australia had under 3000 citrus growers who could easily be provided with information. Pakistan, on the other hand, has 3.5 million growers.

[brecorder.com; 10 May 2012]

USDA Increases Florida Citrus Forecast

Florida will produce an estimated 145.2 million 90-pound boxes of oranges in the 2011-2012 season, an increase of 200,000 compared to last month's estimate, the US Department of Agriculture said in a forecast this week. The grapefruit forecast remains unchanged at 18.8 million boxes. Last season, grapefruit production reached 19.75 million boxes.

[palmbeachpost.com; 10 May 2012]

US (CA): Greening more likely to spread via domestic citrus

Citrus experts have long suspected that the first place they would find Asian psyllids and citrus greening was in someone's backyard. Domestic movements make it more likely for this to happen than in a commercial grove. That scenario came partially true in late April, when investigators discovered the state's first case of greening in the Los Angeles area of Hacienda Heights. Ted Batkin, president of the California Citrus Research Board in Visalia, a leader in the fight against the disease, suspects that when the bug and the disease find their way over the Grapevine and into the Valley, one of its first stops will be in a backyard tree...That's why county, state and federal officials are doing what they can: reminding people about the restriction of moving plant material outside the quarantine zones, holding community meetings and appearing on radio.

[www.fresnobee.com; 8 May 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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