GLOBAL CITRUS SCAN (25)

John Edmonds (3 August 2012) Citrus Growers Association (CGA)

Uruguay frosts slash citrus production by 36%

The Uruguayan government has estimated frost damages in the country's citrus sector will have cut production by more than a third this year, with around US$35 million in losses. This equates to more than 115,000 metric tons (MT) in lost fruit, due to weather conditions not seen since 1967. The country's biggest citrus company Caputto is reluctant to announce its losses as the season is not finished yet…For Calcagno, what is most difficult to believe is how quickly the weather changed from 20-21°C (68-69.8°F) conditions down to below zero in June. "We were having a spectacular year. We started collecting satsumas of very good quality without problems, and it was the same with clementines, clemenvillas too," he says…He says frosts are normal in Uruguay and tend to happen in July, but it's not just the fact they came earlier which is the problem…Calcagno says Navels have been the worst hit and easy peelers were also affected…He says samples indicate the citrus varieties to be picked in two to three weeks time will likely be in better shape. "For the later varieties, such as Valencias and some mandarins like Ortaniques and Murcotts, the harvest will start in two or three weeks and it will be fairly normal… "It's impossible to completely recover the losses from a harvest like this now – we have a juice factory and all the fruit we can't export is going to our own factory, but this is not something we can recover from in the short-term."
[freshfruitportal.com; 1 August 2012]

AU: More concern from citrus growers about deregulation of US market

The chairman of one of three exporters of citrus to the United States says deregulation could ruin one of Australia's best established markets. The Federal Government is conducting a review into export efficiency powers. It says the current situation, with a single importer of citrus into the US, has become anti-competitive. Peter Walker, from exporter Riversun, says he's already started modelling what he says could be a disaster if the market is opened up for a free for all. "Logistically, they'll be a nightmare on the other side to start with, until we actually get a line in the sand to see who actually has a genuine marketing plan and what other exporters will do to damage the market to buy market share."
[abc.net.au; 31 July 2012]

US (CA): Officials losing psyllid struggle

Citrus officials are conceding that they are losing the battle in Southern California's back yards against a pest that carries a fatal citrus disease, but say they remain optimistic about protecting the state's $2 billion citrus industry. The fight against the Asian citrus psyllid became intense earlier this year after a mild winter and early spring prompted an explosion in the insect population in Southern California. As the psyllid commenced its springtime march east from Los Angeles toward the Inland regions, commercial growers and the Department of Food and Agriculture mobilized to treat citrus trees with pesticides, including individual trees in residential neighborhoods. But the bug populations have continued to increase, said Ted A. Batkin, president of the Citrus Research Board, which is based in Visalia but runs a laboratory in a UC Riverside research park near the campus…"We used to find one psyllid a month. Then it was one a week. Now we have a box of 32 traps (with psyllids) that were found in one day," Batkin said.
It's too expensive, and probably impossible, to try to wipe out the psyllid. Instead, the citrus industry defenders will make certain that all commercial growers are treating their trees with insecticide and focus the state's spraying crews only on neighborhoods within 800 meters of the commercial groves as well as the research groves around UC Riverside, Batkin said.
[www.pe.com; 2 August 2012]

US (FL): Jail for violation of citrus quarantine

Four Palm Beach County residents were sentenced in US District Court on charges that they smuggled citrus trees out of Florida in violation of a quarantine to stop the spread of citrus canker and greening diseases, federal officials said Monday…The criminal conduct which violated the federal Plant Protection Act involved shipping more than 1,650 Calamondin plants, a type of ornamental citrus, with a retail value exceeding $37,000, according to the government. Its smooth-skinned fruit resembles a small tangerine. The cold-tolerant citrus is popular as a patio tree. Calamondin has been under quarantine in Florida for many years as part of an effort to eradicate citrus canker. From 1995 to 2006, the state and federal governments spent more than $1.4 billion to control and eradicate the diseases, including over $700 million compensating commercial grove owners for trees that were destroyed…The maximum sentence possible was five years in prison.
[Freshplaza.com; 31 July 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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