GLOBAL CITRUS SCAN (6)

John Edmonds (1 March 2013) Citrus Growers Association (CGA)

Associations and importers act against EU measures concerning citrus black spot

The European Union has announced new measures in the battle against the possible contamination of the citrus black spot on South African citrus. The EU has announced the possibility of an import stop if five cases of the black spot are found. In comparison: last year 27 cases of black spot were detected. Justin Chadwick, CEO of the South African Citrus Association, "I am not sure what has triggered this move, possibly pressure from citrus growing regions in the EU." He goes on to say that there have been no reports of establishment of Black Spot in the EU in over 100 years. When asked if there should be different measure for different measures for different EU countries he said, "Yes, even the EFSA report (still contested by South Africa) shows the risk is to three small areas in the south of the EU – the measures at the moment are not proportional to that risk." Dutch trader's association, Frugi Venta is gathering forces with the importers to turn the tide, as the consequences would be disastrous for the citrus import. "The measures are out of proportion. If this were to go ahead, there will soon be no oranges on the shelves of Dutch retailers, and the citrus market will be turned upside down worldwide," says Inge Ribbens. Fresh produce trade association in the UK, Fresh Produce Consortium (FPC) is also working to find a solution to the potentially devastating South African citrus import stop. Sian Thomas Communications Manager, explains that FPC have met with DEFRA to discuss the issue and are lobbying for a change to the EU legislation. "We are concerned about the impact this would have on UK businesses and that UK consumers would be very restricted on citrus this summer." 60-70% of citrus in the UK come from South Africa from April to November. Sian adds that as there is no citrus grown in the UK there absolutely no risk. The UK authorities are very sympathetic to this issue, but as part of the EU they must abide by EU regulations. There are now many discussions at Freshfel level to get to the measure undone. The citrus importers are also in contact with the suppliers and scientists in South Africa. "The measures are causing mayhem on both sides of the ocean. The problem is that the number, five cases, is a kind of standard within the EU, which has been applied to a number of herbs from Thailand and Vietnam, and citrus from Brazil before, but the problem is that those trade flows can't be compared," says Inge Ribbens. "Brazil announced an export stop itself last year due to these measures, but over there 95% of the citrus remains in the country, and another part goes to processing. Those consequences were nil, and will be much larger for the South African citrus." Frugi Venta points out, among others, a recent American (government) statement saying that the chance of introducing citrus black spot in orchards through contaminated fruit is highly unlikely. The Commission will let EFSA do a new investigation, but the results of this will not be ready until the summer. "The need for clarity is great because the season will start next month. Europe doesn't seem to want to budge from the five finds measure. The question now is how far an import stop will be carried out. In a few weeks the Commission is organising a consultation round, to which the companies will also be invited, so we will make our stance clear once again. Now the sector is threatened by an import stop on South African fruit, and we need to get rid of it as quickly as possible," concludes Inge.
[Freshplaza.com; 28 February 2013]

Citrus leprosis has caused great economic losses in South America

Citrus leprosis is a viral disease that affects growing oranges (Citrus sinensis) and mandarins (Citrus reticulata). Millions of dollars in the citrus industry in Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay, Bolivia and Venezuela have been lost because of this disease, as pointed out by Humberto Ramirez Vazquez, Sagarpa's Plant Health deputy. Upon the detection of an outbreak in the municipalities of Jáltipan and Agua Dulce, in the neighbouring state of Veracruz (Mexico), it is estimated that the disease known as "citrus leprosis" is threatening around 40,000 hectares of citrus…Mobile shops and food markets will be subjected to monitoring operations in order to seize orange, tangerine, grapefruit and lime that have been affected by the plague. Ramírez Vázquez announced that there would be severe economic sanctions for traders who sell goods affected by the bug "leprosis citrus".
[Freshplaza.com; 27 February 2013]

US (CA): Strong demand for mandarins

California mandarins have come through the recent cold snap in good shape and growers are now reporting strong demand. Fred Berry, marketing director of Mullholland Citrus, said, "We're in relatively decent shape in terms of being on track…" He also said that, with only small volumes of Israeli and Moroccan fruit still on the market, California had a good window of opportunity.
[thepacker.com; 22 February 2013]

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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