

GLOBAL CITRUS SCAN (10)

John Edmonds (28 March 2013)



Citrus Growers Association (CGA)

Spain: Citrusgenn unravels citrus DNA

Valencian scientists within the framework of the Citrusgenn project have managed to sequence the genome of citrus. This is a great step forward towards the introduction of improvements in the sector in Valencia and Spain, because there is "nothing in the world comparable to this breakthrough," as stressed by the researcher from the Department of Genomics of the Valencian Institute for Agricultural Research (IVIA), Javier Terol. Although institutions in other places, such as France (Genoscope), the US (Joint Genome Institute), Italy (Institute of Applied Technology) and other countries like Brazil and China are also working on the field, the Valencian project is, "the most advanced and a worldwide reference in terms of the amount of information collected," highlights Terol. After all, since the sequencing of the *Clemenules* genome, which back then was established as the model, the DNA of over 160 commercial varieties of citrus has been unravelled. This not only helps establishing the characteristics of these varieties, it also makes it possible to transfer the work currently being done in orchards (which lasts for a minimum of three years) to laboratories. ...The project itself stresses on its website that the goals focus on extending the campaigns, finding trees that are more resistant to plagues and drought and obtaining tastier and sweeter fruit with a longer post-harvest shelf life, resulting in better commercialisation results...Thanks to the genome's sequencing, "the characteristics we are interested in can be selected before crosses are made without having to experiment first in orchards," explains Terol. The number of tests necessary is also considerably reduced. The president of Asociex, Jorge García, welcomes the advances made to save time, despite it still being a long-term process. Terol stated that it will still take several years to perform the crosses, so "we are already planning to renovate the project, which will finish this year." Citrusgenn was born from a previous international project which resulted in other projects, such as Citrusseq, which started in 2009. The total budget amounts to approximately 5 million Euro.

[Freshplaza.com; 25 March 2013]

Rains disrupt start of lemon harvest in Argentina

Adverse weather conditions in Argentina have delayed the country's lemon harvest, which started two weeks ago. Rains and the time necessary for the fruit to ripen will postpone the regular start of the season to April. "In March, after two weeks pretty much lost, and the Easter holidays, the harvest is quite small," said José Carlos Bertolotti, of Citromax. With 4,000 hectares of plantations in Argentina, the firm is one of the country's largest exporters. The season will not start until next month, so production volumes are expected to be similar to last season's. Bertolotti explained that they are usually the third or fourth largest producer/exporter. Although rains have delayed the regular start of the season, this will help Spain and Turkey in selling out their stocks. It will take all of March and part of April, so Bertolotti expects Argentinian lemons to arrive in northern Europe by late April or early May. Europe continues to be the main destination for Argentinian lemons, but other markets, such as Russia, Ukraine or Asia, keep growing. Their brand is already recognised in Asia. The Middle East market also continues developing, although competing with South Africa is obviously still a great challenge, as it has a better geographical location, which reduces shipping times. At the moment, producers are waiting for the weather to stabilise and for the Easter holidays to finish before starting the regular season.

[Freshplaza.com; 25 March 2013]

Spain: Prices increase as season tails off

Last week's situation continues unchanged, with difficulties to harvest the fruit because of the rains, although citrus firms continue their commercialisation activities normally, as they kept their refrigerated stocks high....According to information from sources in the sector, the commercialisation of lemons of the Fino variety is expected to finish during the first week of April, when the Verna variety will take over, and whose prices keep growing, reaching values during week 11 of 0.50-0.60 Euro/kg. Prices of Fino lemons commercialised this week remain stable at 0.55-0.58 Euro/kg for the loose format, 0.58-0.60 Euro/kg for bags and 0.60-0.65 Euro/kg for boxes...Wholesaler markets (Mercamadrid): Oranges increase 0.02 Euro/kg in value, reaching 0.68 Euro/kg. Mandarins fall 0.02 Euro/kg down to 0.93 Euro/kg and lemons stay at 0.85 Euro/kg...International markets: The price of Navelate oranges grows by 5% in the market of Perpignan St. Charles. Afourer mandarins grow by 10% and Fino lemons also by 5%.

[Freshplaza.com; 25 March 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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