GLOBAL CITRUS SCAN (19)

John Edmonds (30 May 2014) Citrus Growers Association (CGA)

U.K.: FPC slams 'fortress Europe' approach to plant safety

The chief executive of the U.K.'s fresh produce trade association has blasted the European Commission for its latest stance on South African citrus, branding the organization's plant health control rules as 'a lottery rather than a risk-based approach to plant health'. In a statement on Fresh Produce Consortium's (FPC) website, which has also been distributed to U.K. importers and wholesalers of South African citrus via a newsletter, chief executive Nigel Jenney makes the remarks following the recent announcement that exporters would face more stringent export controls because of the risk of citrus black spot (CBS). He also criticizes the Commission for its lack of communication with the industry and its failure to follow recommendations from its own scientific experts. Fresh Produce Consortium (FPC) has been heavily involved with vigorous lobbying of the Commission over the last few months to avoid what it calls "draconian" measures. "After so much effort, FPC has helped to secure a more sensible outcome which we believe can be achieved by South African exporters. This will ensure that the U.K. can continue to enjoy South African citrus," Jenney's statement said. "We are deeply disappointed that there was insufficient support for the U.K. proposal for derogation for citrus for processing. The Commission failed to take on board the recommendations of its own scientific experts to recognize the demarcation between citrus growing and non-citrus growing regions." He added the Commission had failed to take a consistent approach to applying control measures to different countries, with industry communication occurring "too little, too late". "It really is a lottery, rather than a risk based approach to plant health controls. Let's hope that the Commission's fortress Europe approach does not undermine European exports to third countries."
[Freshfruitportal.com; 29 May 2014]

South African citrus growers claim mismatch in new EU regulations

People from the South African citrus industry say they believe the additional measures imposed by the EU on the country's farmers to limit citrus black spot (CBS) are disproportionate to the risks, and have accused some European groups of ulterior motives behind pushing for restrictions. Citrus Growers Association (CGA) of Southern Africa CEO Justin Chadwick told www.freshfruitportal.com the severity of the restrictions did not reflect the relatively small number of CBS cases related to his country. "If you look at the number of inceptions last year – 35 inceptions in 650,000 (metric) tons of consignments – it's a negligible amount, and yet, for the amount of time spent on this issue and the measures imposed, one would think that it is a far greater issue than it actually is," he said. Chadwick also said he thought South Africa was being unfairly picked out, since many other nations have also had cases of CBS but have not received any special regulations...Chadwick went on to explain how various scientific reports carried out since the issue of CBS arose in 1992 have demonstrated that it could not spread onto EU farms. "South African scientists gave an assessment in 2000 and concluded that there was no risk of the fungus speaking into Europe, and in 2010 the US did a PRA [pest risk assessment] and their main conclusion was that the fruit is not a pathway." The geography of South Africa is such that it has two different climates, one in the Mediterranean-like Western Cape and another in the subtropical Eastern Cape which receives rainfall in the summer..."It's a very clear example of the fact that the disease will not spread into the Mediterranean climate, the fact that in the Western Cape, where they have the winter rainfall, they do not have citrus black spot," he said. "There's no restriction on the movement of fruit within South Africa and yet, that area has never had CBS develop there. So that's a very illustrative example of how it won't spread into a country with a Mediterranean climate." Many of Chadwick's views regarding the risks of CBS and South Africa's unfair treatment were echoed by the CEO of a citrus company in the country who wished to remain anonymous..."It hasn't and will not establish itself in the winter rainfall part of the country. We've been growing citrus for over 150 years here. That, to me is the purest evidence. Where does the evidence come from that fruit can transmit this problem from South Africa to Europe?"..."The European part of the citrus growing region is all winter rainfall. We all know that it's Spanish growers, supported by Portugal, Italy and Greece, that just complain. They've had tremendous lobbying and they've convinced everybody that this is a big problem," he said.... In contrast to the South African reaction to the recent ruling, a spokesperson for Spain's Small Farmers and Ranchers Union said the EU's measures did not go far enough. "They are not sufficient. They are not enough to guarantee the health of Spanish crops," the spokesperson said.... "That's what the EFSA said in their last report that there is a clear risk of it spreading to European farms, including Spanish ones." The spokesperson also denied any ideas that Spain wanted increased restrictions on South Africa to limit competition in the citrus market....
[Freshfruitportal.com; 29 May 2014]

Spain: 80% of Huelva's late orange still unharvested

80% of Huelva's late oranges are still on the tree, as "the price paid at origin is so low that producers are considering whether or not it is worth harvesting them." This was stated by the president of the Citrus Growers Association of Huelva, Lorenzo Reyes...Reyes describes the current campaign as "terrible, because prices have remained at rock bottom prices." In fact, orange prices at origin have oscillated between 0.16 and 0.17 Euro / kilo, and in recent weeks they have dropped even lower, down to between 0.11 and 0.12 Euro / kilo; well below the production costs, which according to growers, stand at around 0.18-0.20 Euro / kilo."
[Freshplaza.com; 29 May 2014]

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
YOUR LEVY WORKING FOR YOU – GROWER LEVIES ARE USED TO FUND THE ACTIVITIES OF CGA