

GLOBAL CITRUS SCAN (2016_6)

John Edmonds (21 February 2016)



Citrus Growers Association (CGA)

South Africa: Grapefruit volumes almost halved due to hail and drought

Hoedspruit and Letsitele, where about 60% of South Africa's grapefruit is grown, is in a serious drought situation, to add to the woes of the growers the area was also hit by hail last November which has made predictions for the coming season even lower. Erwee Topham from Alliance Fruit said that some growers will see a total loss but the average will be around a 30-50% drop in volumes from the area. "The situation here is very serious, some growers have more water than others but in general water restrictions are at 30% in Letsitele and 60% in Hoedspruit. The lack of water had a negative impact on fruit set and size," he explains. Some older orchards have already been taken out to preserve water, while others have been cut down and painted white to save the trees for future years. "We only have around 8-10 weeks left of the summer rain season, if there is not some significant rain in this period then the dams won't have water for next year to set any crop," according to Erwee. "So far this year the Hoedspruit area has only had 14-25mm of rainfall which was two weeks ago and with daily temperatures between 35-42 °C we need some more rain for sure...I think we will start mid April as normal and continue through to the end of June, we will stretch it as far we can to help with the marketing. The sugar levels should be high and quality should be excellent," assures Erwee...The exchange rate this year will make huge difference but that is the case for every country so I don't see much going to Japan, we are not focussing on Japan as the main market any more as it has not been a profitable market the past couple of seasons." Alliance Fruit will focus on China, Korea and the South Sea Islands and of course Europe, that still takes about 40% of our volumes...Alliance Fruit's volumes will be down 30-40% on last year if we stay only with the same growers, but it seems to be the same for everyone up north, growers in the Eastern Cape do seem to have a better crop. [Freshplaza.com; 21 February 2016]

US(FL): Early end to grapefruit season

Citrus greening disease in Florida has once again limited the volume of grapefruit the state's growers will ship this season... "We'll finish packing around week 11," noted Paul Genke of The Packers of Indian River. "That's about 10 days earlier than last season, which ended 10 days earlier than the season before that." ...The latest citrus forecast predicts the state's grapefruit production will reach 10.5 million boxes, which is almost 20 percent lighter than the previous season's production of 12.9 million boxes. When production is lighter, the season wraps up sooner. "Prices are up because volumes are down," said Genke... "The biggest market for us, personally, is the Asian market," said Genke. "Japan and Korea are two good markets for us. We still go to Europe, but business has dropped there because of competition from cheaper Mediterranean product."

[Freshplaza.com; 18 February 2016]

Italian town defends its right to citrus fight

Every year in Ivrea, northern Italy, residents of the town follow an ancient tradition which involves pummeling each other with 1.2 million pounds of oranges, reports the Wall Street Journal... detractors have cited food waste, accidents and even the welfare of animals, as reasons to squeeze out the yearly battle. "That's a lot of wasted orange juice," said Andrea Segrè, a professor at the University of Bologna... "Food isn't meant for recreational purposes." Injuries are another sore spot... "I took part in the battles for 10 years until an orange broke my eardrum," said Gabriele Ceretta, 35 years old. "After two days of hearing a constant ringing in my ear, I knew it was time to quit." The annual pelting harks back to the Middle Ages, when, according to legend, an evil local baron made liberal use of his jus primae noctis, the so-called right to sleep with any woman on her wedding night. Finally, a just-married miller's daughter chopped off his head rather than submit, thus inciting a popular revolt. The baron's head is now represented by the orange. And that popular uprising is celebrated with Ivrea's Battle of the Oranges, which since the mid-19th century has taken place almost every year for three days... The town's nine parishes each have a team and bear costs for the fruit... They wear protective helmets and stand atop large carts that horses pull through the town for several hours on the afternoons of the battle... Injuries, not all fruit-induced... Maurizio Solinas, a volunteer paramedic... was among the first on the scene last Sunday when a woman was kicked in the thigh by a horse. As for wasted food, some local officials discount such complaints. The oranges used... are unfit for consumption. And the resulting sludge is recycled as fertilizer. (One visitor ate a particularly sweet orange and suffered no adverse effects.) By some measures, the horses that pull the heavy carts through the melee fare better than humans in Ivrea's annual free-for-all. Veterinarians are on hand to make sure they are up to the task and look for any signs of performance-enhancing drugs.

[Freshplaza.com; 16 February 2016]

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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