GLOBAL CITRUS SCAN (2016_20)

John Edmonds (26 May 2016) Citrus Growers Association (CGA)

"There is huge demand from Japan and China"

The citrus harvest in Victoria, Australia is looking to be in line with last year according to Richard Byllaardt from Seven Fields. "The Navels will be early due to an extremely hot summer, but the dry weather has now broken. We had 40mm of rain a couple of weeks ago which should help to increase the sizing of the fruit. There has not been any frost yet, but some good temperature differentials would be welcome to colour up the fruit." First Navelinas were picked on the 11th of May but just in small volumes, the main crop will be in 2-3 weeks depending on the weather…Seven Fields will send about 200 containers of Navels and Honey Murcotts to China and Japan…"There is huge demand from Japan and China and we could send a lot more fruit if we had it available to us" said Richard. US local citrus production has been late this season, so the Australian fruit will only start to arrive there from early July up to late September. Seven Fields invests a lot to get top quality fruit, more than most other Aussie growers, according to Richard…One of these investments is in netting, "It is a big investment," explains Richard. "But we get higher pack outs. With netting it is 80% plus rather than the normal 60% so pay back is quick." Seven Fields have also bought all the budding wood available in their region this year for blood oranges, as there is a big demand in the UK, US and China. The company has also invested in a state of the art pack house which was built three years ago by MAF Roda and is one of the most advanced in the southern hemisphere. The whole pre-grade area can run with just 5 people. Labour costs are big issues facing Australian growers just now, another is water supply. The back packer's tax which the current government want to introduce is a big concern on the supply of labour and water is becoming more and more expensive. It seems that only the crops which have good market returns can afford to survive, the biggest casualty is wine grapes; the return to growers is below the cost of production and throughout the region vines are being left to die or are being pulled out and replanted with citrus or table grapes.

[Freshplaza.com; 24 May 2016]

End of Spanish citrus season causes shortages

The Spanish citrus season is coming to an end. There are still some small volumes coming in, but not much can be found on the market. Looking back at the season, William Willems of Central Fruit from Brussels is satisfied. "We had a very good season for our Cibel Citrus, in terms of volume, price and quality. We are talking about both leaf clementines and the oranges." At the moment there is a shortage of citrus and the prices are higher than usual. "We will try and bridge our way to South Africa for another two or three weeks," continues William. "It won't be easy with the smaller availability, but we will do our best…The noises from overseas are moderately optimistic. Not too much volume is expected, so this is a good sign for a brand like Cibel…"The situation is different every year, although they are trying to connect the seasons as best as possible. Perfectly connecting two continents would be the ideal situation, but that's almost impossible. Sometimes there is too much Spanish product, this year there isn't enough. There will always be a shortage or oversupply."

[Freshfruitportal.com; 24 May 2016]

Andean nations ramp up fight against HLB

The Andean Community (CAN) has launched a plan of action to combat the spread of HLB, or citrus greening. The protocol, unveiled on Monday, sets out a series of collective measures that the countries have agreed to instigate, including phytosanitary monitoring, fumigation in sites where the vector insect is found and the exchange of scientific information about the disease. The plan of action was approved by CAN's technical committee for agriculture and fisheries, made up of the plant health authorities of CAN's member countries, Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia and Peru. Together with Chile, Peru is the only country in South America where the disease has not yet been detected. Peru's citrus industry has grown at a rapid rate over the past decade, with an estimated 1,000ha of new mandarin production being added every year, principally in central coastal regions, in La Libertad and Ancash in the north of the country and in Nazca and Palpa in the south. According to producer association ProCitrus, total citrus exports reached 115,122 tonnes in 2015 and generated US$123m in foreign exchange. HLB is the most destructive disease affecting global citrus production today. It was first detected in Florida in 2005. Between 2004 and 2011, the Florida commercial citrus acreage and the number of trees decreased by 28 per cent, with greening one of the major reasons for this loss, along with development. As of 2015, the disease was estimated to have cost the Florida citrus industry US$3.6bn in lost revenue. Citrus greening bacterium first enters the tree via a tiny bug, the Asian citrus psyllid, which sucks on leaf sap and leaves behind the greening bacteria. The bacteria then move through the tree via the phloem – the veins of the tree. The disease starves the tree of nutrients, damages its roots and the tree produces fruits that are green and misshapen, unsuitable for sale as fresh fruit or, for the most part, juice. Most infected trees die within a few years and the disease has already affected millions of citrus trees in North America.

[Fruitnet.com/Americafruit; 24 May 2016]