GLOBAL CITRUS SCAN (2016_35)

John Edmonds (9 September 2016)
Citrus Growers Association (CGA)

South African citrus industry prepares for potential HLB incursion

With Asian citrus greening causing havoc in numerous growing areas around the world, South Africa is working hard to keep the region free of the pathogen and refining protocols in case it is ever detected. The disease, also known as Huanglongbing (HLB), is a major problem in places like Brazil and the U.S. state of Florida, where it has severely damaged the industry. HLB, which has a number of impacts on tree health, is easily spread by moving infected plants and through its most effective vector, the Asian Citrus Psyllid (ACP). Citrus Growers Association (CGA) of Southern Africa CEO Justin Chadwick said that at the Citrus Research International's (CRI) recent Citrus Research Symposium, it had been indicated that it was not a question of 'if' the disease would one day find its way into the country, but 'when'. Paul Fourie, manager of the CRI division called the Southern African Citrus Improvement Scheme (CIS) and associate professor in plant pathology at Stellenbosch University, said the industry had a range of initiatives to prevent an incursion. "Whilst HLB and ACP do not occur in South Africa, we are very much aware of what is happening in some other parts of the world with HLB, and the huge threat it poses," he said in a statement sent to www.freshfruitportal.com. "We are therefore working on our own preparedness plans. We have close links with the Brazilian, Floridian and Californian citrus industries, and learn from their experiences. "HLB is being managed in Brazil using a three-pronged approach, one of which is production and supply of disease-free nursery trees (i.e. "start clean")…Similar to the initiatives in California, we are investigating the proactive changeover to production of propagation material and nursery trees in insect-protected structures," he said. Fourie highlighted the Citrus Biosecurity in Southern Africa initiative, which includes engagement with countries in the region and promotes the use of disease-free citrus propagation material from the CIS, instead of the direct import of nursery trees from countries where harmful diseases could be present. The expert also said current measures were being strengthened to control any damage should the disease one day be detected in South Africa…
[Freshfruitportal.com; 28 August 2016]

RSA Valencia oranges fetching record prices in Middle East

Lower volumes and smaller sizes has caused a significant decrease in the amount of South African Valencia oranges being sent to the Middle East in 2016. According to a South African citrus trader, "The lower volumes are a direct result of the early-mid season Valencia varieties (incl. Midknight/Delta) having low tonnage pack outs and yielding sizes of 48/56 fruit (per 15kg), which is not suitable for the Middle East." South African Navels have also suffered the same fate as the early Valencia and the shortage of oranges on the global market has caused pricing to stay reasonably high. The shortage of the South African Valencia has driven prices to levels previously unheard of. Prices for 15kg class 1 count 72/88 are being sold at US$ 12.00 FOB. Just in the past 7 days, prices are reported to be as high as US$ 13.00 FOB. The trader told Freshplaza that prices in Dubai have been at the Dhs 70-75/carton level for the last few weeks, at US$ 19.00-20.00 per carton, and there is every indication that prices could continue to rise. Another factor driving up prices in the Middle East is increased demand due to it being the Hajj period. The prices will most likely soften a bit as demand falls after the pilgrimage. "There is a limit to which one can push the Valencia price in the Middle East before the customers switch to buying juice instead of oranges. Suppliers out of the RSA ought to take this into account when planning to supply for the remainder of the season." advised the trader.
[Freshplaza.com; 8 September 2016]

South Africa 'wins CBS war'

South Africa's citrus industry has met to take stock of its 2016 season, with progress in dealing with citrus black spot (CBS) part of the agenda...Sources say that during the annual general meeting Deon Joubert, the South African Citrus Association's special envoy to the EU, briefed industry leaders on dealing with CBS in Europe…Rather than assessing what new curve ball CBS can throw at them, the message was that issues such as the drought and fruit shortages, should be focused on. Not that the industry will rest on its laurels – industry leaders were warned they should be vigilant because things can go wrong very quickly…The fact is that after the dark days of possible EU market access closure at the end of 2014 due to CBS, the industry has performed remarkably well to reach its current status. One of the most important issues resulting from this was a remarkable degree of industry unity which paints a very encouraging picture as it heads into the future to meet further challenges…
[Fruitnet.com/Eurofruit; 5 September 2016]

Florida Citrus promotes grapefruit in Europe

The Florida Department of Citrus has appointed Midsummer Marketing to handle European promotions for fresh Florida Grapefruit…Our strategy will be to target key trade importers, category managers and retail buyers in the EU market. We plan to provide sampling, display materials and consumer incentives for choosing the world's tastiest grapefruit," said George Smith, Managing Director at Midsummer Marketing. The campaign will focus on providing seamless promotional support for the European Florida Grapefruit importers, distributors and retailers. Midsummer Marketing is confident that the response to this new Florida citrus industry initiative will be very positive.
[Freshplaza.com; 8 September 2016]