

GLOBAL CITRUS SCAN (2016_46)

John Edmonds (1 December 2016)



Citrus Growers Association (CGA)

Hi-tech innovation revolutionises a Limpopo citrus farm

...Stefan and Anné Pretorius established Katlego Sitrus (Katlego), a citrus farming and exporting business, 11 years ago...While Stefan studied mechanical engineering, he is not a newcomer to agriculture, as he spent his childhood on his father's citrus farm...Katlego Sitrus recently developed a scouting smartphone app to speed up response time to pests and diseases. Using the app, a scout can take a photograph of the pest or disease on the tree or plant, then upload the image to a database in real time for immediate identification. A relevant chemical treatment can then be selected and quickly applied where necessary. The app can also be used to track trends in disease outbreaks, and Stefan hopes to use this data to customise chemical interventions, instead of relying on blanket treatments...“Once the app is proven [to work] on our farm, we'll try to commercialise it and get various citrus bodies and organisations involved,” he explains...Stefan says that good agricultural practices will always be effective in reducing pest incidences. He adds that experience has taught him that it is more cost-effective to invest in high-quality sprayers that administer chemicals with greater precision, as this reduces the need for additional pest control strategies. A focus on orchard hygiene has also reduced Katlego's reliance on chemical programmes to control FCM. “We remove fruit that has fallen from trees three times a week as it's the hosts for the larvae. This has helped us save thousands of Rands each year on chemicals.”...Stefan explains it is important to understand the product being exported, regardless of the export method...“To export fruit successfully, you need to produce and pack efficiently and to a sustainably high standard.”...Creating a strong brand identity is also important in overseas supermarkets...Anné stresses that it is essential to be informed about changing consumer demands. A major trend is the move towards experiential purchasing; consumers increasingly use their smartphones to guide their shopping decisions by comparing prices and product reviews. All Katlego's fruit therefore have stickers with a quick-response barcode. Consumers can scan the barcode with their smartphones, then access video clips about Katlego's production and packaging processes. “This brings the consumer closer to the fruit they're buying, and educates people about the production process,” she says...Stefan says that he always questions conventional citrus farming processes, and likes to teach himself new things. “Advice is available, which you need to listen to, but always make your own, educated decisions.”

[farmersweekly.co.za; 25 November 2016]

Africa's relationship with post Brexit Britain

At the first ever Africa Trade Forum, Mr. Boateng said Brexit presents Africa and the UK with a chance to “put development at the heart of our trading relationship with Africa in a way frankly that it has not always been in relation to the EPAs, let's be frank about it”. “The UK recognizes that and we will seek every opportunity to minimize the disruption in our trading relationship and take every opportunity to seize this chance to re-fashion the relationship between the UK and Africa in terms of trade so intra-African trade becomes an opportunity which we can seize together,” he went on to say...

[www.freshplaza.com; 30 November 2016]

Australian govt reaches compromise on controversial backpacker tax

The Australian Government has struck a deal to pass its controversial backpacker tax this week after gaining support for a new rate of 15%, ABC News reported. It will prevent the rate spiking to 32.5% for seasonal workers from the start of next year...The government had faced a backlash from the farming industry over concerns the new tax would make it unattractive for temporary workers to come to Australia...In a release, industry body Citrus Australia welcomed the news...The group's CEO Judith Damiani said the proposed 15% rate was both ‘reasonable and equitable’ and would ensure Australia remained an attractive destination for backpacker labour...Meanwhile, industry body Voice of Horticulture (VoH) highlighted backpackers contribute more than AUD3.5 billion to the economy each year with around 40,000 find employment on farms.

[www.freshfruitportal.com; 29 November 2016]

Spain: Average prices at origin for citrus down 30%

LA UNIÓN de Llauradors has announced that the current citrus campaign is yielding disastrous results...While lower prices were already recorded at the start of the season, with early clementines, for example, costing 33% less than in the same period of the previous campaign, things have been getting worse as the weeks have passed for the rest of varieties. The average decrease, taking all varieties into account, has reached 27%...To this price drop, we must add a 10% increase in production costs as a result of the drought. The lack of buying and selling by stores is widespread in practically all the regions and there is still a lot of fruit hanging in the trees...

[www.freshplaza.com; 25 November 2016]