Global Citrus Scan (2018_36)

John Edmonds (24 August 2018)

Citrus Growers Association (CGA)

Epicentre of soft citrus boom

One of the largest soft citrus packhouses in South Africa is situated in Burgersfort, Mpumalanga, an area that has two things going for it: some of the best soil in the country, a Hutton that continues down for many metres, and a climate of cool nights and hot days, eminently suitable to soft citrus production…Put the two together with the global boom in soft citrus, and you have the recipe for exponential growth, to which Indigo fruit Farming has responded with its Naranja packhouse of 14,000m2 and the capacity for 100 bins (or around 38 tonnes) an hour…"We treat soft citrus like stone fruit, a very sensitive commodity," says Josef Malan, general manager of Naranja Packers. "The difference between a class 1 and a class 2 carton is R100 [6 euros]. In a modern packhouse we have complete consistency – class 1, class 2 and select are always the same. With modern technology you can get a 2% to 10% improvement in pack outs – it's had a dramatic influence." Lucille Strecker, systems and information manager at Naranja, notes that traditionally, class 3 fruit accounted for up to 15% in the pack outs, but that average is now down to 8%...As it is, now during high season there are just over 400 people working day and night to sort and pack the bins of soft citrus coming in from a radius of 200km: Letsitele, Hoedspruit, Burgersfort, Nelspruit. Their projections are for 64,000 tonnes a season and currently it stands at approximately 30,000 tonnes, a stepdown from where they expected to be this year after hail in the Lowveld reduced it by 8,000t… the packhouse offers over twenty different packaging formats to clients, a process which took five years to source the right carton designs, the right materials and the right machinery. Another first was their biological water recycling plant. It filters and cleanses the 50,000 litres of water used in the packhouse for re-use in irrigation…"Our challenge ahead is transport and logistics," says Josef Malan. "Say you pack 32 pallets an hour and the packhouse is working through the night, that's 640 pallets per day and to move that, you're talking approximately 30 trucks. So you need 30 trucks at the packhouse, 30 on the road and another 30 on their way back, in other words 90 trucks in circulation for one packhouse." That is, assuming that everything goes well at the harbour. A recent strike of harbour workers caused a delay, as do mundane things like insufficient reefer plug points at the harbour or long queues of trucks at the harbour…The height of the avocado season coincides with that of citrus, which places further strain on cool facilities at the harbours. The choice of harbour for Naranja Packers depends on cultivar, timing and destination. If fruit go to Cape Town Harbour, almost double the trucking cost from Burgersfort, it's in the European market a week earlier, while Durban Harbour provides good opportunities for return journey freight…It takes about 45 to 50 days for their soft citrus to complete its journey from the orchard to its receivers overseas…."

[Freshplaza.com; 22 August 2018]

Solutions sought at Port of Durban

South Africa's citrus industry is looking at strategic actions which could help solve perpetual disruptions and delays at the Port of Durban…In a newsletter issued to growers, the South African Citrus Growers Association (CGA) said containerised exports to China have doubled this season…The CGA said the added demand for cold treatment shipments caused a backlog in exports, as the supply of container equipment and trucks could not keep up with demand. "The Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) has suggested that a form of operational intervention is required to streamline the challenges around increasing preclearance inspections and cold treatment shipments."… The north quay berth extension and deepening project has commenced and this will continue for the next few years…The release said one berth would be decommissioned in the near future, resulting in a displacement of one of the larger vessels that typically berth at the north quay. "On a positive note, there are plans afoot that should see at least 12,000 pallet spaces of capacity being implemented in Durban ahead of the 2019 season," CGA said. "Of this some 4,000 pallets capacity will be for cold treatment shipments…

[Fruitnet.com/Asiafruit; 24 August 2018]

Argentina to export citrus to China again after seven years

After a seven year absence, Argentine oranges will soon re-enter the Chinese market. On Thursday, the Argentine National Department of Agriculture announced that a company called Trébol Pampa in Concordia, Entre Ríos, had dispatched a container loaded with 22 tons of citrus, destined for the Shanghai Port. According to the Argentine media outlet, Enfiteuta, this is the first time since 2010 that the country has exported soft citrus products to China.

[Freshplaza.com; 23 August 2018]