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WE 'VE BEEN BUSY!!

Sally has been hounding us this week to get our contributions in for this months issue. Needless to say the last couple of weeks have been very busy despite the challenging weather conditions. However that 's no excuse when it comes to Fresh Focus as it has always been our mantra that for a newsletter to be successful it has to be regular. So far in 5 years we haven 't missed a beat and I am not about to start now!

As I said earlier the team here has been in the thick of it over the last couple of weeks. With the exception of Tangelos and Valencia's all other citrus varieties are in play at the moment and when you add in Persimmons and Kiwifruit you begin to understand why the pressure is on. That said this is the industry we are in and these next few months are hugely important to us all so there 's no point in moaning about it we just need to get stuck in and get the job done.

I have been very pleased with our export programs so far. Excellent taste in the Satsumas has allowed us to ship good volumes to Japan (the only Gisborne company to do so may I add). Grower returns have been well above the corresponding local market return and when you consider that Japan likes fruit in the smaller size brackets its even more of a difference. The sea freight program to Japan is now complete and the last of the fruit is in the marketplace. We have just commenced our UK Satsuma program with the first containers due to arrive mid July.

We have Lemons heading to both sides of the pacific rim and more loading this week. Meyer quality has also been excellent and we have seen very high packouts. Most growers have achieved over 80% and some have had export packouts over 90%. I firmly believe that the work that Wayne is doing and our crop monitoring service have played a large role in the on-going improvements we are seeing.

Brian has been literally living and breathing Persimmons over the last 8 weeks and is more often than not the last person to turn out the lights in the office each night. So far so good with Persimmons. We have moved good volumes by air and have been getting stuck into sea freight programs in recent weeks. With Sofresh pulling out of the industry First Fresh now represents over half of the New Zealand Persimmon volume. The First brand is well regarded in all of the markets we service.

The local market is also keeping us very busy with Satsumas, Navels, Lemons, Limes and Grapefruit. The Satsuma marketing scene has been quite orderly this year. Whilst we saw some volatility early on, the last few weeks have been quite steady. I believe a lot of this can be attributed to Turners and Growers who have "managed" the supply into the market better than it was in previous seasons. We have also tried to play our part here by ensuring the market was not over supplied at critical times. Hopefully the nett result is a better orchard return. That has to be the ultimate aim.

Ian

NZ FRUITS BINS

With a number of citrus crops in full swing the demand for field bins is running pretty high at the moment. Although we have enough bins in stock to cover current requirements this is just a friendly reminder to;

- Return any empty bins to packhouse in a timely fashion
- Not stockpile bins in an anticipation of picking, take only what you need.

Refrain from packing anything other than crop destined for First Fresh / NZ fruits e.g. firewood into empty bins.

These days there 's no change out of \$80 for a new bin so you can appreciate that this represents a significant investment by the packhouse and is an asset that they must protect.

Your cooperation is appreciated.



Product Review – Ian Albers

LEMONS

An influx of Lemons coupled with pretty average demand at retail saw grower returns fall back quite quickly from the record highs we achieved in April and early May. Whilst that maybe disappointing it was always going to happen in an under supplied market. We are now starting to see some equilibrium in the market and at current returns growers should still be pretty happy.

My main aim from here on in is to keep supply in line with demand and maximize the volume we have going offshore. We have already shipped 100mt of Meyers to Japan and the US (imagine of that volume had been unleashed on the domestic market) and have the programs in place to ship another 100mt provided we can get enough fruit.

On the Yen Ben front its been a similar story. One chain is now concentrating on selling just one variety and have selected Yen Bens as their Lemon of choice. Other retailers manage both varieties. Export wise we are planning our first shipment for mid July. This is for a new customer and we are quite excited about the prospects this may represent in seasons to come.

If you have any queries regarding Lemons please do not hesitate to contact me.

EXPORT MANDARINS

85mt shipped to Japan this season with just over half of that by air and the balance by sea. Good quality and consistent taste this year has seen good comments from the buyers and excellent returns that are well above the equivalent sized fruit in the local market.

Our seafreight program to the UK is underway and we are looking forward to the first arrivals later next month.



Product Reports —Brian Pepper

PERSIMMONS

The 2009 season commenced earlier than normal. We sold the first Fuyu for the season in the domestic market two weeks earlier than 2008 and export packing commenced about a week earlier than last year on the 23rd of April. Only one grower was still harvesting fruit when a hail storm hit on 31 May. This weather event lead to our last export pack on the 5th of June, quite a contrast to last season when the extended wet weather resulted in export packing lasting to the 23rd of June. We packed 174,000 4kg trays of Class 1 Persimmons this season, 62% of the export fruit was bagged for sea freight shipments. The average fruit size was slightly smaller than 2008. Persimmon Growers will be provided with a detailed Packhouse summary in the near future.

Export sales have been going well and we have had good feedback from all of our customers. We have sold good quantities of fruit to Canada, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Australia, and smaller quantities have been sent to Hong Kong, Indonesia, Pacific Islands, Japan, Taiwan, and the Philippines.

Northern growing regions are still supplying the domestic market with fresh product at cheap prices so the local market grade fruit that we bagged and placed into cool store is only selling slowly at the higher prices that we require. By bagging Persimmons for delayed sale in the domestic market we avoided the poor prices that were on offer in the period of peak supply and our average returns will benefit from this.





SATSUMA MANDARINS



We are well over a 1/3rd of the way through the Gisborne Satsuma Mandarin Harvest. Quality so far has been excellent, despite the intermittent rain and the couple of frosts that we have experienced over the past couple of weeks.

Harvesting has been steadily increasing thanks to good response from growers to keep their picking ticking over as they make the transition from non GA 'd to GA 'd fruit. Gisborne volumes are well up on last year which is helping us meet the increasing demand as Northland fruit moves out of the market place.

24 May – 30 May	Local market (kg)	Export market (kg)	Total (kg)	YTD (kg)
Northland	709,288	18,836	728,124	
Gisborne	108,010	0	108,010	
TOTAL	817,298	18,836	836,134	4,072,112

The past three weeks have seen sales of well over 800mt which well exceeds the 600mt figure mooted by the NZCGI to be the volume of Satsuma 's that the local market can absorb in any given week.

The volume harvested at the end of May was 4072mt compared to 3571 for the same period last season.

On the export side of things there has been 370mt exported from New Zealand compared to 220 for the same period last season which is very pleasing to see. We still remain the only company to have exported any Satsuma 's out of Gisborne this year.

Keri Fresh is well over 98% of the way through their crop and Matakana is still pumping out the fruit, this is holding prices at current returns so there is not a lot of upside expected for this coming week. They are continuing to produce around 20mt per day. All of this would indicate that we could expect them to have Satsuma blocks in the North cleaned this side of two weeks at the most.

On the retail front the last of the Californian Navel Oranges are being sold at heavily discounted prices with retail price points as low as \$1.49, as wholesalers struggle to move fruit before the quality deteriorates.

The first large shipments of Australian Navels have also landed; this may slow up demand for Satsuma 's depending on what they end up retailing for?

The key to keeping the Satsuma 's moving is finding a price point that keeps the fruit flowing through the market and keeps growers happy at the same time which is no mean feat.



LIMES

Lime sales have been steady and pleasing over the past month, with growers generally being able to pick as they will and markets not switching their phones off to avoid my constant encouragement to sell Gisborne Limes. The returns are finally looking a wee bit better with prices coming up in the last week or so and hopefully continuing in this pattern for the ensuing weeks. The one stumbling block that we face every year is that of colour. This phenomenon has not been helped by the frosts that have hit the region in the past few weeks. Colour development has increased in a few blocks and customers are starting question our yellowy white limes. So long as we can keep the majority of fruit hitting the market floor as green as possible then we will continue to have good sales.

Please continue to call me before picking fruit so I can manage the volume of fruit being packed.

NAVEL SEASON

The Navel season commenced a little earlier than normal this year with fruit being harvested in late May for Degreening, this fruit hit the market place in early June. The majority of Navelina and Newhall blocks began harvesting on Monday as brix tests finally came back with the desired results.

Fruit size, colour and cosmetics look good and the markets are very receptive to New Zealand 's New seasons Navels. Bear in mind though that many supermarkets and retailers throughout the country are still cleaning out Californian fruit at very cheap prices and stocking up on New Season Australian oranges that despite all reports, is mainly Large and bigger.

Parent navel blocks are looking great throughout the district, colouring and sizing nicely. Wayne and I will begin testing the earlier parent Navel blocks in the coming month, but there is definitely no hurry to think about picking.

Please call me if you think you have fruit that is ready to be maturity tested, also note that we are still trying to achieve a minimum brix:Acid ratio of 8:1.

GRAPEFRUIT

We have been harvesting and degreening grapefruit for the last couple of weeks with great success. The fruit has been extremely well received and this has been indicated by the good grower returns.

There are still pockets of imported fruit around throughout the country so until this moves through there wont be a huge demand for large quantities of Grapefruit. But slow and steady seems to be working well.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at any stage if you require further information on degreening or the colour spec 's for picking etc.

TAMARILLOS

We have packed a small volume of Tamarillos over the past month and these have been well received by our Loyal Tamarillo customers. At this stage I can 't seem to get enough to satisfy people, but colour seems to be slow in coming to many of the blocks in Gisborne. We are trying to pack fruit once a week at the moment so if you have Tamarillos to be harvested. Please call me so I can time the packing of fruit.



OUT IN THE FIELD

CITRUS – TO PLANT OR NOT TO PLANT ?

At this time of year I commonly encounter the question from new and existing growers of what **varieties should I look at planting**. My first response is often to ask them *why* they are wanting to grow citrus in the first place. Some common responses are as follows –

- *I want an easy care crop*
- *A lot of my neighbours are growing citrus*
- *I 'm sick of annual cropping*
- *Gisborne seems to grow good citrus*

My key piece advice is that if you are considering becoming a citrus supplier ,be quite clear prior to developing a block, what the market (export and domestic) is prepared to pay a premium price for. Work back from the final product and put a careful management plan in place as to how you hope to reach that goal.

Citrus growing, or for that matter most fruit growing, is a long term investment. It is critical you have a sound business plan in place before you consider entering the industry. All current varieties of citrus which are grown in this district are subject to the issue of oversupply at some stage during the season. Based on the assumption that domestic citrus consumption is static, any additional plantings, coupled with possible increases in imported product can potentially lead to increased pressure on sustainable returns for citrus suppliers.

New Zealand citrus growers are relatively new suppliers on the world stage. As an industry we have successfully supplied limited volumes of navels, lemons and mandarins to buyers in Asia. However we have been somewhat erratic in our supply programmes over the year 's which makes it difficult to build a strong relationship with overseas buyers.

In order to be successful as a niche supplier of great tasting citrus we have to develop orchards from day one that are capable of supplying significant volumes of **class one** fruit on a regular basis to meet the requirements of our customers offshore. If you are not prepared to put the inputs in from the start that will enable you to produce this class of fruit you will simply become a supplier of lower value fruit that often fails to deliver a realistic financial return to the supplier.

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SOME OF THE THE KEY REQUIREMENTS WHEN DEVELOPING A NEW BLOCK

LOCATION / CLIMATE
DRAINAGE

SOIL TYPE
SUPERIOR NURSERY TREES

WIND PROTECTION
IRRIGATION OPTIONS

Gisborne citrus is capable of being a regular feature on supermarket shelves offshore providing we 'grow for the market'. By this I mean there are small marketing windows for our products that often co-incide with shortages from other supplying countries. Examples of this include early varieties of Satsuma mandarins into Japan in the April/May window and more recently late season Satsuma mandarins for supply into the UK market in August. New Zealand navels have an export slot currently into Korea and Japan in the August to October period and potentially into the UK and USA arriving for sale before the 'new season' Northern Hemisphere hits the shelves in November.

If you are intending to be a supplier of export product, timing of fruit maturity is critical. For example Meyer Lemons naturally mature (without degreening) over the June/July period which allows for a well managed harvest programme to meet the specifications of our customers. Fruit is select picked for colour and size to fill the required orders. On the other hand Encore mandarins mature outside a current export window and therefore are currently destined for local market supply.

If you are intending planting additional citrus or planting for the first time take the time to discuss the options with the team at First Fresh. We can help avoid any costly mistakes that may affect you further down the line.

A MANDARIN FOR THE FUTURE

This month I have decided to include some information about one of the new, outstanding selections that have been released from the University of California breeding programme. It is likely that this selection will be available in New Zealand from 2012 onwards. It is just one of many new selections that will be released commercially by the UCC over the next few years. This is the 'hot' new variety in the US at present as far as seedless mandarins are concerned and many in the industry believe it is an improvement on the standard Afourer.



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'Tango' Mandarin

**A new seedless mid-late season irradiated selection
of 'W. Murcott' ('Afourer') mandarin developed by the
University of California Citrus Breeding Program**

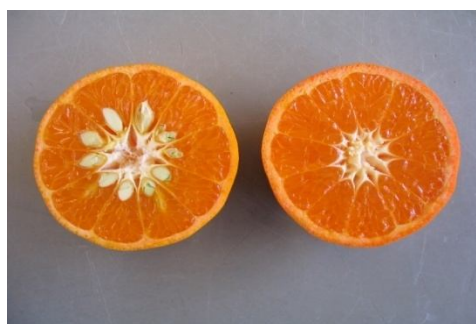
'W. Murcott' mandarin (also known as 'Afourer') is a very attractive, easy to peel mid-late season mandarin (peak maturity February-March) which, when grown in isolated conditions, can be virtually seedless. The variety, known worldwide for its high quality, has been widely planted throughout California over the past decade as consumer demand for high-quality, low-seeded, easy to peel mandarins has increased. It is currently estimated that between two and three million trees have been planted in California with more than half of those trees in production. Production is excellent with very little alternate bearing when grown under commercial conditions. In California, however, isolation of citrus orchards has become increasingly difficult and consequently many 'W. Murcott' orchards in the state have been suffering from an increasing problem with seedy fruit caused by cross pollination by other citrus varieties (notably other mandarins but including Valencia oranges, Minneola tangelos, lemons and other citrus types). This situation greatly reduces fruit value and is not likely to improve over the next several years.

The University of California Citrus Scion Breeding Program located at Riverside has been pursuing seedless mandarin breeding for several decades. One aspect of the program has utilized irradiation of buds from several common mandarin varieties to induce mutations that will cause reduced seed count in previously seedy mandarins. Among these mandarins are several selections from an irradiation of 'W. Murcott' mandarin that were chosen for additional field trials to determine their suitability for release. The most promising of these selections (known during testing as W. Murcott IR1) has been designated '**Tango**'.

The selection has been planted in replicated trials at seven locations in California, three fruiting trials planted in 2001 and 2002 and four trials planted in 2003 and 2004 that will fruit in 2007. Observations on 15-20 three to four-year-old trees in each of the three locations planted in 2001/2002 indicate that all trees produce a good crop of uniformly low-seeded fruit in trials where cross-pollination occurs (see photos). In winter/spring 2006 and 2007, the average number of seeds per fruit was less than 0.2 in samples of 25-50 fruit from each tree at each location. Control 'W. Murcott' trees averaged 8-15 seeds per fruit. Through eight years of evaluation for the mother 'Tango' tree and for from three to four years of evaluation for the other trials trees, all trees appear similar to the standard selection of 'W. Murcott' in all tree and fruit characteristics except seediness, except that, in 2006 'Tango' fruit had lower acidity compared to the (seeded) 'W. Murcott'. In Riverside, California 'Tango' matures in winter (late January) and holds its fruit quality characteristics through April. Fruit size is moderately large (59mm or 2.3 in.) averaging 90 grams (3.2oz.) per fruit. Fruit are deeply oblate in shape with a deep orange rind color and a very smooth rind texture. Flesh color is deep orange and finely textured, fruit are juicy (50% juice), with a rich, sweet flavor when mature (12-14% brix), and are easy to peel. Tree growth habit is upright with excellent production commencing in the second year after planting. Alternate bearing does not appear to be a significant problem. Studies of 'Tango' pollen indicate that 'Tango' pollen has very low germination (~5%) and is smaller in size than 'W. Murcott' pollen. In hand-pollination trials 'Tango' has not set fruit or seed in Clementine mandarins while parallel pollinations with 'W. Murcott' pollen set seedy fruit from 50% of these pollinations. Because this selection results from mutation breeding, its genetic stability is a possible issue, but over 60 trees propagated from multiple generations of 'Tango' buds have remained true-to-type.

'Tango' was released for propagation in California in June 2006. A rapid budwood increase program supplied about 24,000 buds in June 2006, with additional buds expected to be available in September 2006. A system to distribute this limited budwood supply was developed in consultation with the industry. Tango has been submitted for patent protection and has received preliminary (patent-pending) protection. A license to propagate and sell the variety is available to any CDFA licensed California citrus nursery that purchases said license.

The following photos show samples of fruit from the 2004-5 Californian crop.



Afourer (left) Tango (right)



Tango fruit – sample of 50 fruit, 11 seeds in total



'Tango'

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Waynes Reminders

- The disease Brown Rot can be a problem in lemons, navels and grapefruit over the winter months if growers do not apply suitable fungicides as the fruit nears maturity. Cool, moist conditions will often result in severe levels of brown rot if fruit is not sprayed regularly. Spraying the ground underneath the trees, as well as the crop, also reduces brown rot infections.
- The recent hail storm that occurred in Gisborne over Queens Birthday weekend has damaged several blocks. The worst effected variety is Encore mandarins. Growers need to assess their damage carefully and remove any fruit that is likely to be 'juice grade' at harvest time. Call me if you need advice on how to manage a damaged block.
- As you are aware we are now busy testing the maturity of navel blocks around the district. How fruit tastes plays a major part in a consumer's decision to purchase fruit again in the future. While some of the early fruit looks great, it is critical growers do not harvest too early as acid levels are still relatively high (<1.4). Try your own fruit before you decide to race out and strip the trees!
- The pest monitoring programme we have been running is slowly winding down over the winter months but will crank up again from October onwards. Tim will continue to monitor for thrips and rot issues over the winter months on those blocks that are approaching harvest. I will notify growers if sprays are required. We have seen very few lines of fruit with any signs of pest damage to date this harvest season.

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