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Fresh
REWARDS
It All Adds Up

This issue

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“NORTHERN (HEMISPHERE) EXPOSURE”.

Over the last couple of months I had the opportunity to meet our Asian and American customers on their home turf. Well, sort of. Brian & I attended the Asia fruit Logistica convention in Hong Kong and managed to meet with 90% of our Asian customers at this event. The timing was good as it came at the end of the Persimmon season and we had the opportunity to complete season reviews with all of them. I would have to say that all of the customers were very happy with how the season had gone. Quality was good, volume was just right and prices were also good. When you think that we enjoyed our biggest crop ever then its even more satisfying to hear that the customers were happy. Overall I thought the mood of our customers was upbeat and positive.

Last week I attended a similar event in the USA. This convention known as the PMA Fresh Summit is attended by over 18,000 people who are either directly or indirectly involved in the produce business. This was more of a 'pre-season' trip given that most of the business we do in that part of the world centers around Berry fruit, which will be starting in a few weeks. However it was also a good opportunity to catch up with our US Meyer Lemon customer and our Canadian customer who buys Persimmons and a whole range of other stuff from us. I thought that on average the mood in the US was a little more subdued and pessimistic compared to Asia and that's probably understandable given that the recession seems to have been more severe on that side of the Pacific.

In terms of Citrus I picked up on a few trends and issues;

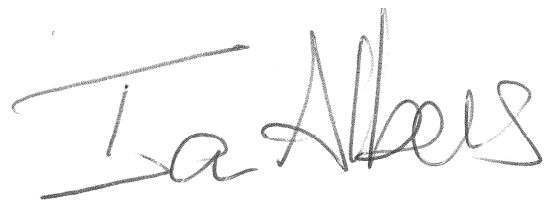
- Meyer Lemons are being widely promoted by a number of companies including the likes of Sunkist. There is growing publicity about Meyer Lemons and it is starting to feature in a wide range of culinary media. This augers well for our program in California as we can ride on the coat tails of this exposure and marketing.
- US Navel marketers are concerned about the ongoing impact that easy-peel Mandarins are having on their domestic Navel sales. With mass plantings of Clementine's, Murcott and now Tango coming on stream there is a definite consumer switch away from Navels. The upshot of this will be an even greater focus on export by Californian Navel producers.
- The Australian Navel program into the US has been severely affected by Chilean Navel oranges. Chile only had access for Navels for the first time this year and some reports put their US program at 1.3 million cases. Given the similar timing to the Aussie Navels and the Chileans lower production costs, the Australians will be desperately trying to hang onto what has been a lucrative market for them over the last decade or so.

In the non citrus category I would say that two things stuck out. One was the number of booths promoting Organic produce (maybe with consumers spending less, Organics might be suffering?). And the other was the number of companies that were promoting traceability and food safety systems. Again maybe that's a sign of the times given some high profile food safety issues in the US recently.

On the home front we have seen a mixed bag of weather for the early part of the month, however the stories I am hearing suggest that most growers are facing a heavy flowering on most crops. Hopefully that will translate into a high volume / high quality fruit year.

We are now well through the Navel season and have about 4-5 weeks to run. We normally see a bit of a price lift about now as supply starts to taper and the influence of imported navels on price diminishes however this year it appears to be a different scenario. I must say that I have been very impressed with the quality of the Navel crop this year both in terms of taste and cosmetics. We are seeing some very good packouts and this is a credit to the growers who have put the effort into shelter, thinning and canopy management.

With the advent of Spring, Stuart is back on the payroll looking after Asparagus and Strawberries. We have already shipped some Asparagus to Japan. It will be interesting to see how the Strawberry deal pans out this year particularly in the US.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ian Albers". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style. The first name "Ian" is written with a long horizontal stroke above the 'i', and the last name "Albers" is written with a similar long horizontal stroke above the 'A'. The signature is positioned in the lower right quadrant of the page.

YENBEN LEMONS

Not quite the same story here unfortunately. A mediocre export deal that never really fired save for a 4 week burst in September resulted in a lot of fruit being held for the domestic market which has also been sluggish. Retailers have been spoilt for choice in terms of supply and have only been able to keep their buy prices at levels that result in break-even pricing to the grower at best. We are hoping for increasing demand over the summer months and have been counseling NZ importers that we should be self sufficient over the summer months. It would be nice to be able to enjoy some profitable business for at least a couple of months. The best advice is to sit tight, and harvest fruit as and when required.

MEYER LEMONS

With only limited volumes of Meyers available there has been a corresponding lift in grower returns as some customers seek out this variety in preference to Yen Ben. We have recently completed our final pool payment for the export season and I was pleased with the final outcome that averaged out export and local market returns. I think with a bit of tweaking we can run the pool system each season for the benefit of all concerned.

Overall we exported 185mt of Meyers this season and this amounted to 64% of the total Meyer supply. Its fantastic to see more than half of any citrus crop going offshore. Quality was excellent this year and there were no issues on arrival. Our Japan buyer is in Gisborne at the end of this week and we will be visiting some growers as well as discussing the program for next season. With plenty of new plantings set to come on stream in the next 3-5 years it is vital that we continue to build our export programs.



Product Reports —Phil Croy

SATSUMA MANDARIN 2009 SEASON REVEIW

Last week I mailed out the 2009 Satsuma Mandarin season reviews that show Satsuma growers their orchard production information compared to last season, along with a sheet showing pack house averages for benchmarking purposes.

We put a lot of time and effort into creating these reports and this is reflective of how important we feel it is for us to work with growers to review the performance of their blocks and ascertain what worked well, what didn't and where we should be heading for next season. This is a win win for all parties involved and part of the "First Fresh package".

Wayne and I will be conducting an overall review on this season's performance to get a better understanding on where we go looking forward to next season. Each year has its challenges and this season was one out of the bag, but in saying that there are a number of issues that need addressed and Wayne and I will be making recommendations as we put plans in place for the next Satsuma season.

Those of you with Miyagawa and Miho may have noticed that a lot of these blocks look like they are setting up for another big crop next season and what you decide to do with these trees in the ensuing months will have a huge bearing on their performance next season.

If there is anything else that you would like to know in regards to last season, we are able to provide pack out information in a number of ways. Please feel free to call me at any stage to discuss what options are available.



ENCORE MANDARINS

The Encore season is well underway with most growers taking a slow but steady approach to select picking fruit over 55mm+.

Growers should be "Select picking" for size on their first picks, allowing for up to 3 to 4 picks during the season which normally runs from October to March. The average fruit size packed to date is very similar to last season and is currently sitting at around 59mm (M-L).

The 2008/2009 season was an off year for most Encore blocks so we are looking towards a big increase in volume for the 2009/2010 season despite the damage we have seen in a number of blocks as a result of hail and frosts.

The Encore Mandarin is very suitable for pre packs; this season we have managed to get pre packs into another chain that normally does not stock Encore pre packs and too date they are moving through very good volumes of fruit.

Please keep in contact re harvesting so that I can best manage the volume of fruit coming through the Packhouse.

Product Reports — Brian Pepper

TANGELOS

After making an early start to the season Tangelo supply and demand has been steady. Now that school is back, retail demand has picked up and demand for *First* and *GizO's* Tangelo pre packs has improved. To maximize yield most growers who have started picking are selecting medium size (70mm) fruit and larger and are leaving the smaller fruit to size-up. Most growers who want to do one strip pick are waiting for their average fruit size to improve.



The majority of Tangelos we have tested recently have achieved the minimum ratio of 7.5 Brix to 1 acid and have been cleared for harvesting.

BEANS AND SWEETCORN

We have a sales programme in place for beans and sweet corn and we are aiming to build on the successful growing and sales programmes we have had in past seasons. We are very keen to talk to people growing either of these crops.



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NAVEL SEASON

Australian imports and periods of local oversupply have all played their part in making this one tough season. However, demand is increasing slowly and we have a few promotions and programmes in place that will soak up the volume of fruit still yet to be harvested.

Fruit quality remains high, even though the majority of growers are now strip picking. The fruit is clean and sizes are still at the larger end.



LIMES

Limes with any form of green on them are still very much desired. There are considerable volumes of imported fruit around. New Zealand product that doesn't quite have the same overall colour is selling for slightly less. If there are growers with fruit still on trees— be they yellow or green— there is still a good market for both so please get in touch.

TAMARILLOS

The last of this season's Tamarillos have been packed and sent, ending the season for 2009. The crop was comprised predominantly of small fruit with a few blocks damaged with Hail early on in the growing season. Average net grower returns however have been quite pleasing considering the above. Here's hoping for hail free, drought free conditions next year that will enable production of large blemish free fruit.

GRAPEFRUIT

We are almost through the grapefruit season and I am happy to report that selling grapefruit for the second year has not been as tough— I must be learning! The season kicked off a tad earlier than last year with de greening. This enabled us to move good volumes of fruit into the market early on and achieve the better returns. This coupled with a new process grade market has meant that we haven't had nearly the build up of fruit as seen in previous years. We will have the majority of blocks all harvested within the next 2-3 weeks.

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CROP MONITORING

Crop monitoring for our citrus clients is about to pick up speed again as the 'new' growing season gets underway. Once again First Fresh will be providing a cost effective pest monitoring service to our existing clients, as well as expanding the programme to accommodate new growers for the 2009/2010 season. Most of you know Tim Cresswell and Shirley Hills who were the monitoring team from last season. This season we have a new face – Chris Hunt who will be helping out 1-2 days per week. Chris has a background in wine making and gardening and we welcome him to the team this season.

Flowering is commencing on navels and lemons, and as temperatures increase over the next few weeks we will see a corresponding rise in bee activity, along with Kelly Citrus Thrips and Whitefly towards the beginning of November.

KELLY CITRUS THRIP CONTROL

Growers are reminded to target their 1st thrip spray at **100% Petal Fall** (early November) when bees are no longer active on citrus flowers. This is the stage when thrip damage is likely to occur to the developing fruitlets on the majority of the citrus varieties we grow. The timing of this spray may vary depending on the numbers of KCT present. Once the 5% spray threshold has been reached, growers are advised to apply the insecticide **Success Naturalyte** within 7 days. Over the past few seasons this product has provided good protection against early season thrip damage. There are several key points that growers must observe when applying this product.

- Thorough spray coverage to all fruitlets is critical. There is no systemic action with this product. Success works by both contact and ingestion activity directly on the thrip larvae. Success **must** be applied in conjunction with a spreader such as Latron.
- Water rates for spraying must be sufficient on larger trees, especially if canopies are dense and unpruned. Suggested application rates of 2500-3500 litres/hectare will be required on such trees.
- As with all crop spraying ensure wind conditions are ideal – wind speed of 15kph or less.
- Use the recommended label rate of 40ml/100 litres of water. Do not apply less than 800ml/hectare on mature trees.
- Success is compatible with most other agrichemicals and maybe combined with the fungicide Dithane (Mancozeb) at petal fall.
- Do not apply more than 3 applications of Success per season.
- Avoid applications if rain is expected within 6 hours of spraying.
- Success is safe on the majority of beneficial insects that are present in the orchard. More than 3 applications can lead to an increase in Mealy Bug populations later in the season.

The levels of Kelly Citrus Thrip damage recorded at NZ Fruits pack house this season has been the lowest for several years. Pressure from this pest was high during the season on the majority of orchards and growers have responded in time with key sprays when required. Lemon growers face extended pressure from KCT due to the multiple flowering cycles on this crop.

Currently the best strategy for KCT control on lemons is still Acephate (Orthene, Lancer) when pest numbers are peaking. The advantage of this product is that it is systemic which provides control of the pest for up to 5 weeks compared with 1-2 weeks on the majority of other chemicals. However Acephate **must not** be applied to lemons that are likely to be exported to the USA. Product options for the USA are Success, Avid and Diazinon. None of these products are systemic so complete coverage to the entire tree is critical.

The use of Acephate should be targeted primarily on lemons, and its use restricted to 1-2 applications per season if possible. We are now seeing increasing populations of all scale species (especially red scale), which can be directly related to the use of broad spectrum insecticides which are killing off a large number of beneficial insects in the orchards.

Next month I will discuss the best strategies for successful scale control in your orchard.

LEMONS

As lemon suppliers are aware this season First Fresh operated a 'pool system' for lemon suppliers. This has been a success and allows us to extract as much of the local crop for export as possible. As Ian has previously stated nearly 70% of our Meyer lemon crop has been sent offshore to either Japan or the USA. First Fresh are looking to increase the amount of lemons exported next season, and to achieve this we require additional volumes of export suitable fruit. Given the increase in Meyer plantings over the past few seasons it is important growers focus on growing fruit that is suitable for export. Ian and I are currently putting plans in place for the upcoming season and plan to meet with all lemon suppliers in early November to outline the 2009/2010 programme.

2009/2010 SPRAY PROGRAMMES

I'm currently finalising the new Citrus Crop Protection Programmes for this season. These are due to be released in early November. These programmes are designed to be used in conjunction with the crop monitoring service that we currently offer to growers. It is important that growers familiarise themselves with the chemicals that are being recommended, and are aware of any restrictions on crops and withholding periods. There is likely to be some changes to last season so previous versions should be discarded. If you have any queries relating to product options contact me **before** you spray.

WAYNES REMINDERS

- Commence with foliar feed applications now. What to apply needs to be based on last summer's leaf analysis. If there is limited new growth present delay your 1st application for 2-3 weeks. Magnesium Nitrate in conjunction with Zinc sprays should be applied where required.
- Ground applications of nitrogen should have been applied by now to coincide with recent rainfall. It is important **excessive** nitrogen is not applied to under cropping trees or vigorous plantings, especially those on the stronger C35 or Benton rootstocks.
- Last week I have seen some excellent Encore mandarins entering the packhouse. As Phil has stated we have a huge crop in the district this season and I need to remind growers to keep an eye on fruit size at harvest. Some growers are allowing a significant amount of 50-55mm fruit to be picked. Leave this fruit on the trees for the 2nd pass when fruit has sized to the more profitable size range.
- Although we are reaching the end of the navel season there is still a high risk of brown rot development in your orchard with the recent rain and with temperatures on the rise this coming week. We have had in excess of 100mm of rain over the last few weeks which has washed off any fungicide cover that may have been present. Phosphorous acid sprays should be applied if you are in the process of harvesting. Alternatively Dithane (Mancozeb) can be applied with a 14 day WHP.

- Scale crawlers are not present on any of the monitored blocks. Some blocks have areas of citrus red mite appearing and a miticide is being recommended where pressures are high.
- Blocks are being monitored weekly or fortnightly depending on the varieties concerned. The main focus of monitoring at present is to determine the presence of KCT larvae in citrus flowers.

TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Following on from our successful grower workshop last month we have 'Grower Guides' available to all growers that supply First Fresh. They have been produced so growers can easily refer to during the growing season. We have produced them for Navels, Lemons and Mandarins. New seasons 'Crop Protection Programmes' will be available from next week. Products on the programme will be rated under several categories and technical pointers for successful use will be included. I will be distributing this information to growers over the next week.

WAYNES REMINDERS

- Commence shoot rubbing this month on trees that have been winter pruned. Rubbing now will remove the need to use secateurs at a later date. Keep the inside canopy free of strong vertical growths.
- Avoid heavy pruning now as lemon tree borer is very active at present.
- Consider applying a copper spray over flowering to lemons, grapefruit and tangelos if your block has had a previous history of verrucosis, melanose or alternaria. Wet weather over flowering can possibly trigger an infection if the disease is already present in your block. Copper is an excellent protective option.



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