

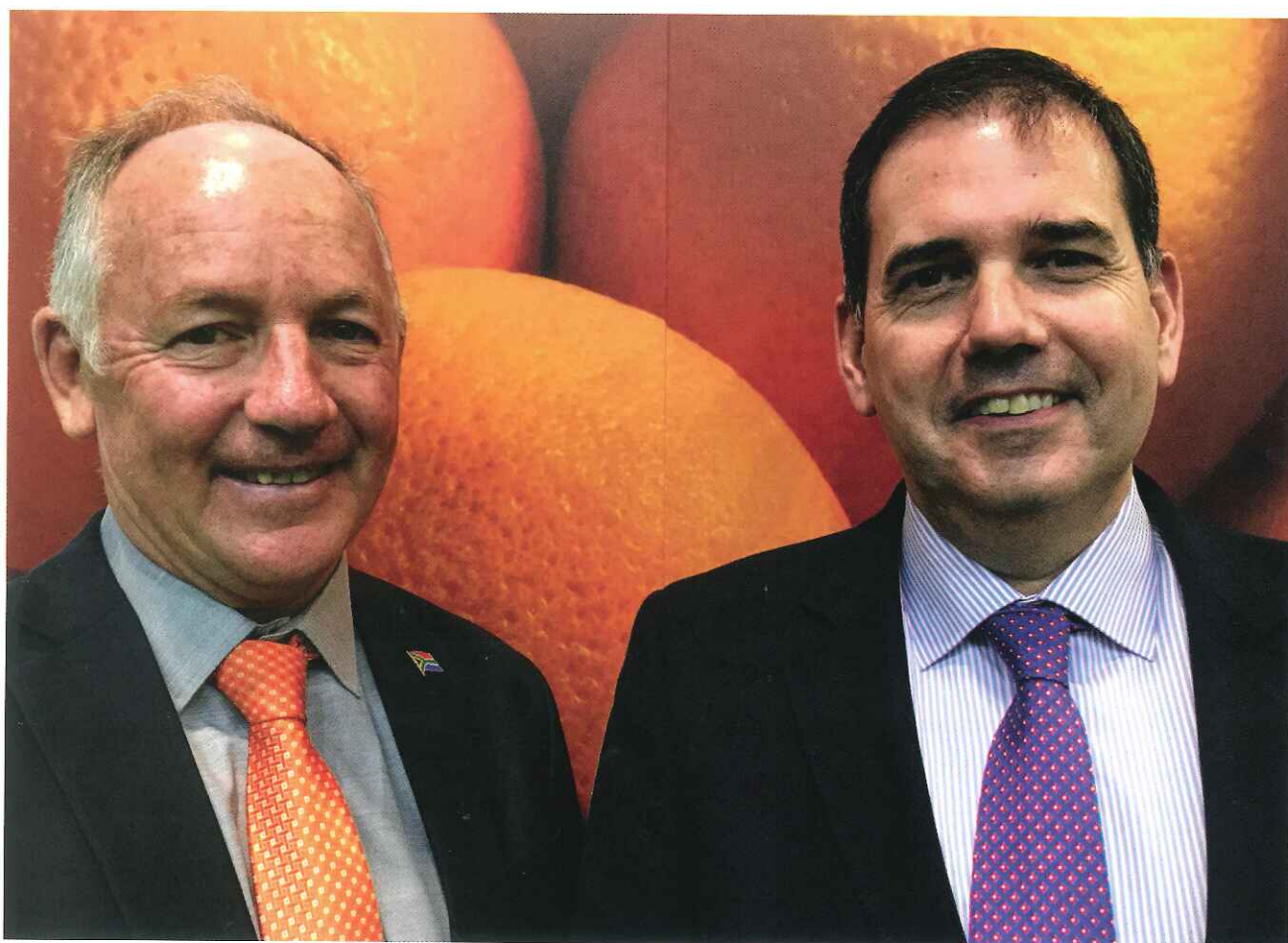
## INTERVIEW

—Justin Chadwick, CGA &amp; José Antonio García, Ailimpo

## No wedge between them

MADRID—Despite media reports that might suggest the opposite, citrus industry officials in Spain and South Africa say they want a close working relationship between all producing countries.

by Mike Knowles

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**W**orking together and pursuing the common goal of boosting citrus consumption across the globe will be very much at the heart of the newly formed World Citrus Organisation (wco), whose formation was confirmed at Fruit Attraction in Madrid last October. For the two founding architects of the group – Justin Chadwick, chief executive of South Africa’s Citrus Growers’ Association and José Antonio García, secretary general of Spanish industry body Ailimpo – there appears to be a real determination to steer clear of the kind of sensational, dispu-

tatious conversations that seem to circulate in coverage of their respective countries’ citrus industries in certain media outlets.

Speaking exclusively to EUROFRUIT alongside García, Chadwick doesn’t beat around the bush when asked about where such reports originate. “The problem that we have is there is a sector in Spain – not necessarily Inter-

citrus but also some of the farmer unions – whose only ambition seems to be to attack,” he explains. “It doesn’t matter what you do. Partly it’s administrative and logistical blocks, but it’s also using the media to promote a sense that we [in South Africa] don’t care and we just send all our fruit while pulling the wool over people’s eyes. Total nonsense.”

EUROFRUIT understands that talks about a possible world organisation have been in the making for some time. "We have been speaking to Ailimpo for many years because we find that, even if it's a robust conversation, it's a conversation, not just a one-minded track where you cannot speak," Chadwick says. "The fact that Spain is the number one [citrus] exporter in the world and we are number two makes us leaders in our sector when it comes to trade. We've seen the formation of the World Apple and Pear Association, a world cherry association, table grape association, avocado association. We've also seen the market share in citrus is actually decreasing compared with these other products. There are good statistics on it that show sales going to avocados and cherries, for example. If you go back ten years and look at our share of the fruit basket then versus now, it's definitely less."

García is equally clear on the need for a more collegiate, collaborative approach to the category across borders and between the two hemispheres. "As Ailimpo we think we need to take responsibility and work for the future and forecast how the business is going to behave in the next 10-15 years," he reveals. "We cannot do that alone. We have to do that with our colleagues and our competitors. We have to promote consumption and we can learn from the experience of other countries in fighting diseases like greening, for instance."

#### GLOBAL EXPANSION

Towards the end of last year, it was confirmed that seven more citrus-producing countries will become members of the wco, meaning the new entity will soon cover more than two-thirds of the world's citrus production. Australia, Bolivia, Brazil, Egypt, Greece, Portugal, and the US will join founding

members Argentina, Chile, Italy, Morocco, Peru, South Africa and Spain, while European fresh produce association Freshfel has agreed to coordinate and administer the organisation from Brussels, Belgium.

The group's first official meeting will be held in Berlin next month during the annual Fruit Logistica exhibition, where it will focus on sharing ideas and boosting international consumption of all types of citrus. In a statement outlining its goals, it said: "Most recently the sector has been faced with an extensive array of significant issues of global concern including growth in production, overlapping of seasons, changing climate conditions resulting in varied quality and biosecurity challenges, increased competition within the citrus category and between other fruit categories and food products as well as stagnating fruit consumption. The wco will facilitate member countries to better face these common challenges and identify opportunities for the collective benefit of the citrus sector."

Freshfel, meanwhile, has provided more detail on the wco's mission, which cover a variety of key points as follows:

- Discussing common issues affecting citrus producing countries.
- Exchanging information on production and market trends in order to prepare for the next decade to come.
- Fostering dialogue on policy issues that are of common concern.
- Identifying and promoting research and innovation projects specific to the citrus sector.
- Liaising with public and private stakeholders on citrus-related matters to highlight the importance of citrus producers and the need for a fair return.
- Promoting the global consumption of citrus.

During its official presentation in Madrid, the Director General of Agricultural Production and Markets of the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, Esperanza Orellana, congratulated the citrus sector for the initiative, emphasising the importance for Spain, leader in the production and export of citrus fruits, to be at the forefront of the project.

The Counsellor of the Region of Murcia, Antonio Luengo, also greeted the participants and expressed his support for the new organisation. "It is important that the world citrus community works together to face common challenges and learn from each other," he said, adding that, leaving aside the competitive factor, it was essential to share information and experiences for the collective benefit of the sector, which is of key strategic importance for Murcia and for Spain. **E**

OPPOSITE—The organisation's founders, Justin Chadwick of CGA and José Antonio García of Ailimpo  
BELOW—Spain's orange sector is yet to take a seat at the WCO table

