

New export opportunities on the horizon for citrus

It will not be “business as usual” for South Africa’s citrus industry in 2018, according to Justin Chadwick, CEO of the South African Citrus Growers’ Association. As of 1 January 2018, false codling moth (FCM) became a regulated pest in the EU for some produce items, including citrus, and would be subjected to internationally accepted, standard commercial cold treatment to ensure that shipments were free of FCM.

“The introduction of the EU’s False Codling Moth Management System (FMS) will present some challenges, and [everyone] involved in the citrus value chain will need to ensure that they are fully [informed] about what is expected of them,” Chadwick said.

With regard to citrus black spot (CBS), Chadwick said that despite the local citrus industry achieving good export volumes to the EU market, it was at high cost and administrative input, due to unnecessary measures introduced by the EU.

“We will, however, have to tighten up on measures again in 2018 to ensure continued access.”

Currently, 31% of South Africa’s soft citrus, with 6% of its navels and 7% of its lemons, are exported to the UK.

According to Chadwick, the UK’s decision to leave the EU presented an opportunity for the local citrus industry. “The UK does not have any citrus at all and therefore there is no

need for protectionist measures.” He believed this could ease citrus exports to the UK and consequently bring about a strong injection for the SA industry.

Chadwick also anticipated that markets in the Philippines and Vietnam would open up for SA citrus, while the association would focus on gaining wider access to the US market. In addition, it was hoped that import conditions for SA lemons to China would improve.

From 2014 to 2015, global citrus exports to China increased from 161 833t to 214 873t. Although South Africa remained the main supplier (with almost 100 000t/annum), the country’s share of imports declined, while imports from the US and Australia increased significantly, he said. At present, an increase in soft citrus and lemon production was expected, which would make efforts to gain access to these markets more urgent in 2018. Production levels of navels were, however, expected to return to normal. – *Jeandré du Preez*

BELOW: According to Justin Chadwick, CEO of the SA Citrus Growers’ Association, the UK’s decision to leave the EU presents export opportunities for SA’s citrus producers. FW ARCHIVE



SUBTROPICAL FRUIT

On-farm and trade challenges must be addressed – Subtrop

A number of on-farm challenges would have to be addressed in the subtropical fruit industry in the coming year.

This was especially true of the litchi industry, which until recently was regarded as a wild crop, but was now being subjected to more precision farming methods already in use for other crops. This was according to Stephan Schoeman of Soetkalmoes Consultation in Nelspruit, which is a consultant to the tree crop industry.

Water management was one of the primary challenges, he said: “For the 2017/2018 harvest, good irrigation management can help reduce [the splitting of fruit] by making sure developing fruit do not experience stress, which may

reduce the uptake of calcium, and negatively impact cell division.”

For the 2018/2019 harvest, Schoeman said a wet late-summer would require the industry to be very conservative with irrigation during autumn to prevent unwanted flush growth. “Hopefully fuller dams will make irrigation a bit easier during the coming season,” he added.

According to Derek Donkin, CEO of the South African Subtropical Growers’ Association (Subtrop), the macadamia sector was expanding the fastest, followed by avocado production, with a number of new growers having entered the market, and existing growers expanding production. Expansion of export markets would

definitely encourage growth in the industry, he said. “However, in the shorter term the rate of growth is often determined by the rate at which nurseries can produce trees for new plantings. Factors such as the availability of suitable land, as well as water rights, also [have an impact],” Donkin said.

Subtrop was actively involved in securing new markets, as well as assisting industry members and government to meet the phytosanitary requirements of these markets. Retaining current markets by ensuring compliance with regulatory requirements and optimising trading conditions were also priorities, Donkin said. – *Gerhard Ulys*