



FROM THE DESK OF THE CEO (38/09)

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Citrus Growers Association (CGA)

QUOTE OF THE DAY: "To travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive" Robert Louis Stevenson

ELECTRONIC AGE

It is really ridiculous that we rely so much on the paper trail when electronic solutions are in most cases available. Looking at the list of concerns raised by export agents at the coordinating meeting it is very evident that we need to move into the electronic age, and sooner rather than later. All of these issues could be addressed:

- Handling guidelines, waybills and other official documents should be date coded so there is a clear indication that it is the latest and current version.
- All documents available on the web.
- Black listed PUC's would immediately be evident as the system would preclude them from the relevant market.
- Variety names would not be misspelt or incorrectly entered as "drop down menus" would allow only the range provided.
- Registration for special export markets would be a simple verification and sign off process.

We do understand that the trading partner needs to accept electronic phyto's; but let's at least get into a position where we are capable and then we can negotiate.

DAFF reported that electronic registration of Food Business Operator (FBO) codes is now enabled. For a grower, the PUC is your FBO code; and for a packhouse the PHC.

The PPECB annual report identifies five flagship projects – of which one is "consolidate and fast track the Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) project". We have been discussing EDI for some time now, and we lend support to PPECB and DAFF in getting this implemented as soon as possible.

EXPORTS TO RUSSIA: SOUTH AFRICA AND ARGENTINA

Since June South Africa and Argentina have been sharing information on the exports of oranges, soft citrus and grapefruit to Russia. Argentina's orange growing region suffered drought conditions in 2008, and as a result their exports to Russia from June decreased by 400 000 cartons (15Kg); which is how much South Africa's exports to Russia increased over the same period. Given the poor markets in Europe early on, the reduction in Argentinean volumes to Russia helped in keeping prices at a reasonable level. In the case of soft citrus, both countries increased their export volumes to Russia.

COMPETITIVENESS

This week the Agricultural Economics Association held their annual conference in Durban, and I decided to go back to my roots and attend (being on my doorstep). The theme was "Promoting the Competitiveness of South African agriculture in a weakened global economy" – a very apt theme as we come out of our export season. Six significant factors that determine competitiveness were presented during the plenary session – 1) Good governance at all levels of government and industry. As an industry body CGA strives to govern our mandate with transparency, honesty and good ethics. We expect the same from those with whom we interact. 2) Increased education levels – particularly in science and maths. With a bursary fund of around R1 million a year the citrus industry is investing handsomely for the future. 3) Promote research in agriculture – growers in the citrus industry invest R20 million a year into citrus research and technical development and extension; with zero support from government (despite this being really a public responsibility). 4) Adapt new technologies – cryptogran and XSIT are examples of the adoption of research in the citrus industry. 5) Implement an effective extension service – in the citrus sector technology transfer is done via study groups and through government extension services by the four extension personnel employed by CRI. CGA and CRI have an arrangement with Limpopo Department of Agriculture whereby citrus specialist are trained and assisted to give advice to new growers in that province. Similar arrangements are under discussion in other provinces. 6) Attract competent and committed human resources. Make the citrus industry an interesting and rewarding place to work.

PACKED AND SHIPPED 2009

DUE TO THE HERITAGE DAY HOLIDAY NO PACKED AND SHIPPED FIGURES THIS WEEK

YOUR LEVY WORKING FOR YOU – GROWER LEVIES ARE USED TO FUND THE ACTIVITIES OF CGA, CRI AND THE CITRUS ACADEMY