

AUSTRALIA

New technology really App-peeling to banana growers

Recently a new Better Bunch App is introduced. It is a time-saving tool helping banana growers across North Queensland better manage their crops. It saves growers time by allowing them to record their on-farm practices while out on the farm and access their records, either by their mobile device or computer.

So far the Better Bunch app has been used to record practices on over 3000 hectares in North Queensland. Australian Banana Growers' Council (ABGC) Extension officer Robert Mayers says, it saves the hassle of taking a pen and record books into the field.

GP Graders advances apple tech

Melbourne-headquartered GP Graders has announced that it has entered into a technology partnership with Ellips of Holland that the company says could revolutionize the ability for apple packers to identify apples with internal defects. According to GP Graders, the move will allow companies to meet increasing supermarket demands which are 'crippling the industry'.

Stuart Payne, managing director of GP Graders says, "This cutting-edge technology will change the industry, and strengthen the packers ability to provide defect free apples to supermarkets". The system uses light spectrometer technology and takes ten images sliced across each apple to detect internal browning



and core rot wherever it is located in the fruit.

According to the group, the technology doesn't just shoot a beam of light through the centre of the apple to look at the core in isolation, but it also analyses the entire mass of the apple, slicing the apple at ten incremental stages in order to check for internal rot or browning wherever it is located through the fruit.

Ellips chief executive Erwin Baker oversaw the installation operating first hand at GP Graders' head office in Melbourne, Australia, where the technology has been fitted to an operating apple line. Bins of apples were run through the system allowing GP Graders to intensively test and demonstrate the technology. "The results were remarkable," said Payne.

CHINA

Tianjin harbour welcomes first batch of South African Apples

A batch of South African apples with a weight of 21.6 tons and a value of 22,600 USD entered the Chinese market for sale after a check by the Inspection and Quarantine Bureau. It is also reported that this was the first time that Tianjin has received an import of South African apples. Accordingly, the apples have already been transported to the Beijing, Tianjin and the Hebei province area to supply the demand.

Bacterial fertilizer increases crop's quantity and quality

Microorganism bacterial fertilizer is the most natural and remarkable compared to normal fertilizer, because it is a biological fertilizer that combines different kinds of microorganisms and fermentation. It can improve the absorption of nutrition by the plant, and prevent plant diseases and insect pests. This statement was given by Mr. Bai Yuqiang, technological advisor at the Jiangsu Heyang Jiangsu Zhejiang Shanghai Biological Technology Research Promotion Center.

He says, "Our company was founded in 2000. We work together with fruit and veg-



etab le farmers all over China. By using our fertilizer, they can increase their production quantity and improve the product quality. Currently, we mainly do business in Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Shanghai. Two of our main development areas are a grape plantation in Jiaxing and a pear plantation in Cangzhou. When promoting our fertilizer, we use different kinds of promotion for different regions, based on their local characteristics."

Heyang does not only provide fertilizer. It also has a wide range of services, from fertilizer guidance and field management to sales assistance. After buying their fertilizer, one of our service employees will personally inspect the soil and crops at the plantation. He will then tell the farmer how to use the fertilizer. When the fertilizer starts to work, an employee will guide the farmer on how to manage his fields.

Chinese tech company Cydiance launches two new data tracking lines

For real time data monitoring a Chinese tech company Cydiance will soon launch two new lines of devices, called the Locra and Pura line, which the company will distribute worldwide. Both lines will be launched at the end of the month.

The Locra is a temperature data logger and real-time location tracking device. The device lasts for up to fifteen days. The Locra Plus is equipped with a larger battery, and lasts for 6 days. The Pura line is equipped with an extra humidity sensor, tracking temperature, location as well as humidity levels.

The new devices will be added to existing product portfolio. Cydiance realized that their clients are searching for different, complementary solutions. For example, often one container is equipped with several temperature tracking devices. Not all of these devices would have to be equipped with a location tracking device. They offer their clients the possibility to purchase exactly the data monitoring they need. We can equip a container with a complete solution containing for example one real time device, as well as two offline devices. This will save costs for their clients.



The Pura and Locra real time devices are currently being tested in over fifteen countries worldwide before their full commercial release. The countries include Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and the USA.

CHILE

Chile airport campaign takes off

Asoex has unveiled its first ever airport promotion in its latest bid to tap into new distribution channels.

Apples, kiwifruit and pears from Chile are being marketed as the ideal travel snack across eateries at Madrid-Barajas airport in what food service operator Areas describes as the airport's first generic fruit promotion.

Co-funded by the Chilean Ministry of Agriculture and supported by ProChile, the trial campaign will run between 14 August and 14 September 2017. "This pilot promotion is an exciting development because it's the first time any Chilean product has been promoted at Madrid-Barajas airport, or any airport," said Asoex chairman Ronald Bown.

Roberto Paiva of ProChile said if the campaign was a success it could be extended to other major airports in Europe and other Chilean products. According to statistics from Spain's airport administrator Aena, the country was the third-most visited destination in the world last year, receiving 75.3m tourists and marking the fourth consecutive year of record-beating numbers. During the same

year, Madrid-Barajas airport registered 50.4m travellers.

Depending on the outcome of the trial, a second cycle of promotions for Chilean stonefruit, blueberries or even cherries could take place later in the year. Chilean fruit will be advertised on digital menu boards at food outlets, through signage on baskets of fruit and via posters by the check-out, all showcasing Fruits from Chile branding with a Humboldt penguin cartoon icon.

ITALY

Forecasting and improving fruit grades

Irrigating only when and in just the quantities needed is a well-established concept, but now research is working on something new: irrigating according to the grade based on forecasting models. So far, tests have been carried out on apples and pears and have just started for kiwis.

Tests include the electronic grading of 240 fruits per hectare. A second grading is carried out after 15-20 days. By measuring the growing percentage, it is possible to calculate an estimate of the final grade. If the value does not meet the producer/market needs, then it must be improved.

A unit and soil sensors to collect all parameters were installed in a Rosy Glow orchard at azienda Marconi Davide, in the Ravenna province. Data is cross-referenced with that from the weather station and processed using the Irrinet programme, a system developed by

Conorzio Cer and available to all agricultural businesses in Emilia Romagna.

The final grade is calculated using software developed by HK Consulting. Precision fruit cultivation, a specialized evolution of precision agriculture, is a real time monitoring method based on forecasting models. It enables the optimization of resources through the monitoring of fruit grades.

By cross-referencing all the data collected, producers know what type of production to expect months in advance. They have all the time they need to modify something to increase the grade and final weight of each single fruit, if needed. With the second measuring, they can verify whether the strategy adopted is working.

Organic sector in Italy grows by 20%

A strong growth with a 20% increase in cultivation last year is expected from Italy's organic agriculture sector. According to Sistema d'Informazione Nazionale sull'Agricoltura Biologica, Italy's organization for organic agriculture information, the number of farms cultivated through organic methods in Italy reached 1.79 million in 2016, compared to 1.5 million in 2015.

Last year, more than 300,000 hectares of land were converted to organic farming, while the number of operators rose to 72,154 (+20.3%). Italy's agriculture minister, Maurizio Martina, said that the Italian agricultural model is "one of the most sustainable in Europe".



Among the crops registering the highest level of growth in the organic sector are vegetables (+48.9%), cereals (+32.6%), grapes (+23.8%) and olives (+23.7%).

JAPAN

Unmeltable ice cream thanks to a strawberry extract

Scientists have created an unmeltable ice cream using a liquid form of a polyphenol obtained from strawberries in Japan. The ice cream from the Japanese store Kanazawa Ice can maintain its appearance and taste for five minutes in the sun.

The polyphenol ensures that the fat water do not separate from the ice cream's base mixture, so the dessert maintains its shape despite being in a high temperature. This discovery was

achieved as part of a research to help strawberry farmers affected by the earthquake and tsunami that struck Japan in 2011.

NEW ZEALAND

NZ ranks high for fresh fruit and vegetables consumption

The 5+ A Day Charitable Trust was established in 2007 to encourage the consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables in New Zealand, funding by voluntary contributions from New Zealand's produce industry. According to their latest research New Zealand's consumption of fruit and vegetables ranks high globally.

According to a survey carried over 700 people aged over 15 across New Zealand, 37 % of respondents consumed five or more services of fresh fruit and vegetables each day, while 59 % consumed at least four different types of fresh fruit and vegetables daily.

Less than 15 % of the population aged over 15 in the European Union consumers at least five services a day, according to Eurostat, while the Prospective Urban Rural Epidemiology study of 140,000 participants from 18 countries found that mean fruit and vegetable intake was 3.76 servings per day.

Paula Dudley, general manager of 5+ A Day, said when compared to global statistics, New Zealanders were rated among the highest consumers of fruit and vegetables, but there was room for improvement.



"Now it is time for some stretch goals – we need to keep awareness top of mind to move consumption even higher to 45 percent," Dudley said. "This isn't just a numbers game - there are huge health benefits for us all in doing so."

MYANMAR

Great potential for organic production

Myanmar has potential to develop an organic market that will help to boost the value of local crops produced for export purposes and improve living standards for farmers. Growers in Myanmar already use less chemical fertilizers and pesticides compared to their neighbours, yet many are reluctant to venture into the organic market owing to transport hindrances and high costs, said U Wann Tin, owner of Sein Le Oo Organic Farm, which produces organic mushrooms.

Mr. Wallop Pitchpongsa, CEO of Top Organic Products & Supplies Co, said at the Organic and Natural Expo in Thailand said, "There is a good market for organic products from developed markets like Japan, the US and Europe". Currently, Thailand is one of the largest exporters of organic foods among the ASEAN members. "We are seeing very good demand for organic fruits and vegetable products from the developed countries, but we cannot meet all the demand because we do not have enough human resources," he said. Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam have the potential and opportunity to fill that gap because there is ample land available for organic farming, he added.

Currently though, there are just a handful of organic companies in Myanmar. Because organic crops are generally more expensive than non-organic crops, the organic market in Myanmar is still small. He added that consumers in Myanmar are still not thinking about whether the fruits and vegetables they buy are organic or not. "They are more concerned about buying at an affordable price. So, the market for organic food is still not developed or widespread in Myanmar," U Wann Tin said.

So far though, only three companies have been certified organic by the

International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM). Among them are Sein Le Oo Organic Farm. Meanwhile, Genius Shan Highlands Coffee, which produces organic coffee, is recognized as an organic company by the Myanmar government as well as the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), its managing director, Ma Lay Lay Myint, told The Myanmar Times.

THE NETHERLAND

Dutch organic sector unites against potato disease

Recently Dutch organic potato breeders, growers, and big supermarket chains signed the "Expedited transition to more robust potato varieties" agreement. With this agreement, the organic sector wants to find a sustainable solution for the devastating potato disease: Phytophthora.

The main reason for the agreement is the large-scale damage this disease caused in 2016 to organically grown potatoes. Potatoes are prone to getting phytophthora and natural pesticides were found to be lacking. To speed up the process, the agreement partners have decided to give robust varieties preference in the breeding, growing and selling stages. In this way it will be possible to have 100% organic disease-resistant potatoes by 2020.

At the moment, there are six types of disease-resistant potatoes available on shop shelves. This will grow to about

between 10 and 12 varieties. There will then be a wide variety of robust organic potatoes available in the various supermarket chains and organic shops. Bionext will monitor the yearly progress.

Bionext's director, Bavo van den Idsert says: "We are pleased that we could get all the parties on the same page. This is a good example of cooperation in the supply chain. With this agreement, organic potatoes are taking the lead in the making potato farming sustainable."

POLAND

Organic food is the fastest growing segment in the industry

Organic product sales in Poland are growing by 20% every year, and this is a long-term trend that has been recorded for the third or fourth year in a row according to Wiktor Mialkowski, a partner at Pro Business Solutions. In fact, the organic food segment is the fastest growing out of all foods sold in stores.

The main reason behind rapidly growing popularity of organic food is that Poles attach increasing importance to healthy eating. The value of the national organic food market in 2017 may exceed 1 billion zloty (about 235 million Euro) for the first time according to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.

Organic food accounts for about 0.5% of the food market. For comparison, in Western Europe and the share



stands at 2-8% according to the data quoted in the IMAS "Organic Food in Poland" report.

According to data from the Ministry of Agriculture, the number of organic producers has grown from 3.7 thousand in 2004 to 24.2 thousand in 2016. Most of them are in the Warmia-Mazury, Podlaskie, Zachodniopomorskie and Mazowieckie provinces. The number of organic farms has increased from 55 in 2004 to 562 in 2015. Organic foods can increasingly be bought at discount stores and supermarkets.

SPAIN

Agreement to defend Canary "papa bonita"

Producers and the Government of the Canary Islands have signed an agreement to guarantee the marketing of ten thousand kilos of this product to overcome the difficulties of its harvest.

The heat and drought recorded this year have especially affected the harvest of the Canary "papa bonita" potato, as these conditions are favorable for the appearance of the Guatemalan potato moth.

The Councillor of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries of the Government of the Canary Islands, Narvay Quintero, said that this is a "gourmet product characterized by excellence and quality, and which has a high added value."

The main buyers for this potato variety will be fruit and vegetable wholesalers

and the tourist industry; a "very important" market, in the opinion of the Councillor, who has said that the cultivation of this type of potato has increased in Tenerife in recent years.

According to the crop's latest map made by the Council in 2016, a total of 2,358 hectares are devoted to the product's cultivation, 58% of which includes Canaries.

Narvay Quintero stated that the public company GMR will not only try to introduce the potatoes into new marketing channels, but will also guarantee payment "in a timely manner" to growers; something that, "unfortunately, large retail chains are not always able to deliver."

TURKEY

Turkish cherries target China

According to Belit Balci, deputy managing director at leading Turkish cherry exporter Alara Agri Business, there is great potential for Turkish cherries on the Chinese market following last year's agreement of a protocol between the two countries.

Due to Turkey's lower labour costs and huge production, exporters have high expectations for the market though most cherries sold in China are imported from the US. Recently Alara sent its first shipment of cherries to the Chinese mainland, arriving in Guangzhou.

"We are sending the varieties Regina and Kordia, as these are the most appreciated on the Chinese market," said Balci.

"We do not anticipate significant volumes this season, just enough to understand the legal import and quarantine procedures."

"There is great potential for Turkish cherries in China," he stated. "Turkey is the biggest cherry producer in the world, and there is a huge trend towards developing varieties for alternative markets. At the moment, the Turkish government, growers and exporters are very much focused on developing China as a new market."

USA

Mission debuts organic avocado box

A new range of organic avocado boxes has been introduced by California-headquartered Mission Produce. The new white boxes are stamped with Missions' brand and a distinct purple stripe, available in both single and double layer packs. The avocados are labelled with purple PLU stickers and sold in purple mesh bags with bag straps.

Megan Berenbach, organic category manager for Mission, said the new packaging is to help retailers and consumers to distinguish between organic and conventional avocados.

"The new packaging is unique, clean and bright," added Robb Bertels, vice president of Marketing for Mission. "Based on the popularity and growth of the avocado category and especially organic avocados, we feel strongly that we need to do more to highlight organic for retailers and consumers alike."

"It helps to highlight the organic fruit for backroom staff and will help them identify inventory as they pull Mission Organic avocados for display," Berenbach said. "As the organic category grows, we made it a priority to support our customer's needs with updated packaging."

"According to the Hass Avocado Board, over 50 % of heavy avocado users consider organic to be an important attribute when they are on the path to purchase. We don't expect that to slow down, and anything we can do to highlight organic will benefit the category."

Mission Produce operates across Mexico, Peru, Chile and the US, with ripening centres across North America and Europe. ♦

