

### INDIA

#### Exporters unfazed by Mango ban

The ban on Indian mangoes, two types of gourd, eggplant and taro plant came into effect on 1 May after authorities in Brussels found Indian exports contaminated with fruit flies last year.

Dr. Sudhanshu from government authority APEDA is of the view that with less than 10 % of Indian mangos are exported to the EU, and India already has well-established markets of the Middle East, Asia and the US which are still thriving.

"The EU ban is not so much of a bad thing," said Kaushal Khakhar, CEO of Indian exporters Kay Bee. "With the EU ban in place, there's now potential for exporters to explore other markets including south-east Asia, Australia and New Zealand."

"India needs to strengthen post-harvest treatment to ensure the quality of the produce is in line with the demands of each country," said Sudhanshu. Citing different treatments needed for different countries, including irradiation treatment for the US and vapour heat treatment for New Zealand, Sudhanshu said ensuring India meets the requirements of the EU depends on what they ask for on their end.

Sudhanshu said the ban is an opportunity for India to strengthen the food safety protocols it already has in place, including the mandatory steps of all perishable goods passing through APEDA-certified pack houses before exporting them.

### EQUADORE

#### Demand for Ecuadorean bananas among Chinese consumers being exploited

After a successful trial this year Agroban a group of independent Ecuadorean banana producers has signed a deal to send direct shipments to China.

The new contract is expected to run to the end of January 2015, during which



time it will ship a total of 418,000 boxes of bananas through the port of Dalian. Executive director, Manuel Romero, is confident that the new agreement will allow the company to establish a firm foothold in the market and raise awareness of its brand.

Ecuador exported a total of 1.8m boxes of bananas to China in 2013 and by the end of March this year shipments had already reached 1.4m boxes

### EUROPE

#### A push to market large influx of Melons

The export campaigns of many Greek summer fruits are already underway. Cherries have seen a reduced production this year and this resulted in lower export volumes. The apricots exported are mostly of the Bebek variety, lower in price than the Tiryns. After a good start, watermelon exports have been hampered by very low prices; a problem also affecting the shipments of early peach and nectarine varieties. In general there is a decrease in the consumption of summer fruits in central and western Europe, and Spain and Italy, Greece's main competitors, had a higher production compared to last year and are trying to gain ground by lowering prices in the Russian market.

This year's cherry production volumes dropped due to adverse weather conditions and especially rainfall, which



affected areas of Pella and Imathia, where most of the country's plantations are located. Export volumes fell, while producer prices were at higher levels than last year.

Apricots of the Bebek and Tirythos varieties are being exported in sufficient quantities and for acceptable prices, although the effects of hailstorms in the Peloponnese had a negative impact on the prices and volumes of the Bebek variety.

Watermelons are mostly shipped from the regions of Ilia and Achaia, where prices at origin have "plunged" to 7-12 cents. In contrast, exports of open field watermelons grown in Trifyllia reached satisfactory prices for producers, averaging 30 cents per kilo.

Meanwhile, exports of early varieties of peaches and nectarines have also started. Prices are low, mainly because of economic issues in the Russian market and the low levels of consumption in Western Europe.

Regarding the export of apricots, Mr. Diamantes Milina, manager of Sun fruit in Halkidiki, explained that "exports of the Tirythos variety developed very smoothly this year, with good prices at origin. In our area, the variety had a good quality and there were larger production volumes. There were some problems with the Bebek variety, which is mostly demanded in the German market. The results in Russia were very modest. In recent years, domestic consumption has remained at very low levels, forcing producers to switch to exports."

As for watermelons in the beginning, there was optimism, as initial prices were good, but when larger volumes arrived to the market, prices fell to very low levels. Exports have focused mainly in central and eastern Europe and the Balkan countries."

And regarding peach and nectarine exports, this season they have been exporting the early varieties, the quality of which is really good. So far prices for peaches and nectarines prices are low, as there are great supply volumes from our competitors (Italy and Spain). We also face great difficulty in penetrating new markets."

### AUSTRALIA

#### Grapes on show in Japan

Australian Table Grape Association chief executive Jeff Scott visited Japan as he was encouraged by the potential in this market. The trip, organized in association with the Victorian Government and AusTrade. Scott said the visit highlighted the demand for high quality, Australian-grown table grapes.

The Australian industry secured direct access into the Japanese market in early February. According to Scott, 15 containers have been sent to Japan so far this season, a foundation he is adamant the industry can build on.



He said, "From the base level we have created this year, I think it's realistic we could send between 50 to 100 containers there next season. Over time, I can see Japan developing into a significant market for the Australian industry but we want to do it properly and not cut corners."

### NEW ZEALAND

#### Demand outweighs supply for NZ apples

The supply side of New Zealand Apples seems to be outpaced due to strong international demand.

Paul Paynter, general manager of Hawkes Bay-based grower-packer-marketer Yummy Fruit Company says that the only obstacle they face is the shorter than anticipated supply of the fruit. The percentage drop in the crops is expected to be around 20%. Paynter said, "It's still a decent crop, it's just a shame we won't

be able to keep taking advantage of this very high demand for our fruit."

While volumes will be down but the size and quality are exceptional with particularly strong interest from markets such as Singapore, Vietnam and Malaysia.

The New Zealand industry has also had Chinese market access reinstated, although Pip fruit New Zealand chief executive Alan Pollard warned export volumes to the People's Republic are likely to fall this season. New Zealand exported over 9,500 tonnes of apples to China last year.

Pollard agreed there had been a high degree of demand for New Zealand pipfruit over the early stages of the season, with prices "holding up strongly." He estimated export volumes would fall from 320,000 tonnes in 2013 to 303,000 tonnes this year as a result of biannual cropping.

### THAILAND

#### Thai exporters granted reprieve

Imports of Thai vegetables were planned to be banned by the EU, according to a report in the Bangkok Post, following the discovery of produce infested with whiteflies, thrips and leaf miners.

The union has since softened its stance on the condition Thailand inspect all shipments of 16 suspect vegetable types to the region

EU ambassador to Thailand David Lipman said, however, if the country failed to comply with the standards it would have a ban placed on exports to EU countries

He said, "We're worried about this EU requirement. If we cannot comply, it means a ban," he said. "We have about 200 vegetable exporters, many of them traders without their own farms or packing factories, and that makes it difficult to control contamination," he added.

The Agricultural Department could introduce standards for vegetable shipments to the EU, which could then be used to screen out exporters unable to comply.

### MEXICO

#### Mexico waging war against American apples

After 50 years in the apple business, Vicente Robles from the Mexican state of Chihuahua is cutting down most of his orchards. The trees are still productive, but no longer profitable. This year, Mexican growers produced a record harvest.

"We were very happy," said Robles. "The harvest was coming well after two years of not having one."

But their bumper crop came after a year of record imports of American apples. By the time the Mexican growers were ready to sell their fruit, markets were already filled with apples from up north.

"We had to give up on the markets and sell to the juice industry," he said.

Gómez said the juice companies paid him less than a third of what it cost to produce the apples. Now, growers can't pay their workers or their bills.

Chihuahua's apple industry — which employs about 35,000 people and accounts for 70 percent of Mexico's apples — tried to get the Mexican government to suspend US imports.

In February, growers staged what they called a "survival march." Others dumped apples in the streets in protest. The Mexican press was sympathetic. A local newspaper headline read: "Gringo apples: Ugly, Old and Cold."

Mexican Senator Patricio Martínez from Chihuahua tried forcing federal action — he did it standing on a box of unsold apples on the senate dais in Mexico City.



According to him someone from outside their country wants to do away with Mexico's apple plantings, so that Mexico will become dependent on their production, at their prices and their conditions," he said.

He also accused the US of illegally "dumping" — selling apples at a price lower than production.

Up in Washington State, they see the situation much differently.

"We really feel there is room for both industries in the market," said Rebecca Lyons, the international marketing director for the Washington Apple Commission. She said they did sell a lot of apples in Mexico last year, but that's because Mexico had so few apples of its own.

She said Mexican growers also caused some of their own heartache — they grew too many apples. Lyons added that they're also growing more and different varieties up north, and that gives Mexican consumers more choice.

### WESTLAND

#### **New Asian mushroom makes its way into Europe**

Westland Mushrooms introduces a new mushroom: the Hatakesimeji. The Hatakesimeji finds its origin as a wild forest mushroom and has been successfully cultivated in China. Besides being very tasteful, the Hatakesimeji is healthy and full of nutrients favorable to human health like amino acids, dietary minerals, Vitamin B and Beta dextran. Beta dextran has multiple medicinal uses and is said to reduce cholesterol levels.

The domestic cultivation of the Hatakesimeji is the result of many years of research. After the successful introduc-



tion of exotic mushrooms like Shimeji and Eryngii in the European market, the interest for this newcomer - the Hatakesimeji - could spike quite rapidly.

### ITALY

#### **A campaign to forget for Sicilian carrots**

Massimo Pavan, deputy chairman of the PGI Ispica New carrot consortium and sales manager for Pef srl. Said, "In normal years, Sicilian carrots are popular abroad between April and late June, but things didn't go that way this year."

The reason was that winter was rather warm all over Europe, carrots were still available in countries like Denmark and Holland when they were ready to export. This led to a 30% decrease in the carrot export.

This absence of foreign outlets was met by a difficult situation on the domestic market too, as consumption was affected by the economic crisis and by the fact that productive areas in Lazio and Veneto ended their campaign later than usual, so we only had 30 days to place our produce.

He said that Production was in the norm, things would have been worse had we overproduced." Still, 20% of carrots will remain unharvested, as harvesting them now would be useless." Just think that the price of carrots from Chioggia is only 0.10/kg and it costs 0.07 to transport carrots to Northern Italy!"

The situation is affecting the entire carrot sector as "for example, 80% Chioggia carrots are destined abroad but, if Germany harvests early, which it probably will, it will be impossible to sell them. Despite this, over there they usually harvest carrots anyway, even if they sell at 0.03/kg, to avoid leaving roots in the ground."

#### **Turatti presents Eco-Dryer**

Turatti developed a revolutionary drying system for delicate produce. Eco-Dryer is a perfect solution to remove water from a variety of vegetables including baby leaves, thus improving their quality and extending shelf-life.

"It is the evolution of the first machine we designed three decades ago. A pre-assembled compact unit that can be adjusted and customised to meet the specific needs of clients," explains Alessandro Turatti (in the photo), sales manager for the group.

"Sanitisation was improved and new technologies to enhance drying and contain maintenance and running costs were implemented." In addition, a series of integrated solutions enables the saving of up to 30% water and control the quantity of heat and humidity released.

He also said that operators can change all of the main settings, including humidity and temperature, very quickly thanks to an intuitive control panel that manages the computerised system. It is so simple that it can be used also by non-qualified personnel."

Cleaning and sterilisation are automatic thanks to an integrated CIP circuit so operators only have to worry about external cleaning. High-quality, sustainability and versatility - this is Eco-Dryer!

### SWITZERLAND

#### **New label to stimulate organic sales at specialist stores**

In Switzerland, three quarters of the turnover generated by organic products is achieved by the retail giants Coop and Migros. For their part, smaller specialist retailers have created the label bioPunkt to stimulate sales at these stores.

It is more difficult for smaller shops because they have little advertising budget, are often not centrally located and cannot compete with the low prices of the retail giants. The sales figures tell the story: from the two billion Swiss francs in turnover achieved in 2013 with organic food, a billion went to Coop and half a billion to Migros.

Bio Partner Schweiz AG, one of the largest trading partners for Swiss shops specialised in organic foods, wishes to help small traders with the launch this week of the new label bioPunkt. Fruits and vegetables with the flower bud logo of Bio Suisse, the Demeter logo, or the

"Pro Specie Rara' logo will be unified in stores under the new "bioPunkt" logo.

Portanatura, in Zofingen, is one of the first stores to introduce bioPunkt. "The new umbrella brand should make it easier for our customers to choose a particular product, because they can be sure that 'bioPunkt' only includes products from the three strongest labels in Switzerland," said Priska Roth, of Porta Natura.

### GREECE

#### Provisional results for Greek summer fruit exports

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### USA

#### American scientist grows Asparagus in meteorite dust

The space industry has started to think about how they will feed future interplanetary residents, and the current idea is to grow asparagus. Astro-ecologist, Michael Mautner of Virginia Commonwealth University has been researching which plants could be adapted to such an environment, the results depend on the types of meteorites.



"Carbon asteroids contain complex organic carbon, nutritional elements and extractable mineral water," explains Professor Mautner, "Algae, asparagus and potatoes have grown well in these soils and in those of Martian meteorites".

However, in space the plants would be grown in an anaerobic outer-space environment with no oxygen, and the question of gravity will be important too.

### NETHERLAND

#### Chemical-free citrus post-harvest becoming new standard

Dutch fresh produce company Cool Fresh International developed a project to find an effective post-harvest treatment against fungi, bacteria and viruses, using environmentally-friendly and biodegradable products which are completely safe for humans – both at production level as well as at consumer level.

The company being an established fresh fruit specialist with clients in over 50 countries embarked on a research project in partnership a number of partners: the GOGO group, its primary South African citrus supplier; Han Maathuis of BioClean, a company devoted to hygiene optimisation in critical business processes; and Rene Besteman of Besteman Techno Support, a company which specialises in low volume mist installations and which has designed a highly effective nozzle to facilitate the application process.

Eben Kruger, of GOGO, explains: "In 2011, we conducted the first small-scale tests in our farms in the Mpumalanga and Limpopo area. Implementing the process was easy, as by using the patented nebulisers we were able to adjust the dosages of the biodegradable treatment product exactly and efficiently".

According to Niels Stolk of Cool Fresh International these first tests were promising in the sense that oranges arrived in Europe in the same condition as those treated with Thiabendazole, Orthophenyl phenol or Imazalil. The test pallets were stored for a long period of time with good results, which prompted Stolk's company to devote even more resources to the study. ♦

