

BELGIUM

In five years, two thirds of inspection will be digital

As of three years ago, Guy Callebaut has been chairman of Global GAP. The Belgian native earned his stripes in the cultivation of fruit, and is known as a board member of BelOrta and VBT, the Association of Belgian Horticulture Cooperatives. He talks about the certificate and GlobalGAP's ambitions.

Of Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany, we know that only 20% of the professional growers aren't certified. Those are mainly growers who sell locally, or growers that only supply to industry. Of the growers that sell through BelOrta, 100% of professional growers have the GlobalGAP certificate. The large retailers demand the certificate, so without it you can't sell produce. The FAO estimates that globally, there are 500 million family agricultural companies, of which 150,000 are GlobalGAP certified."

Guy Callebaut said, "We are working towards a system in which a large part of the inspection occurs digitally. In five years, the idea is for two thirds of the inspection to be done digitally, and only a third on location. Companies already have a lot of data available digitally, so we want to use that data. Already, application of fertilizers or crop protection agents is mostly recorded digitally."

He further said that, "We have also just introduced the GlobalGAP standard for processed fruit and vegetables, in con-



junction with SAI Platform. Many retailers are saying: 'if we're holding fresh products to standards regarding sustainability, then why not for the processed products: cooked, frozen, freshly cut or pressed?' The emphasis of this standard will mainly be on sustainability, because many of the food safety elements are excluded during the transformation process. The major processors have production units and thus also suppliers in various countries. GlobalGAP gives them the opportunity to certify all their suppliers in a uniform manner."

CANADA

Govt. investment in McCain Potato plant

The Federal Agriculture Minister Lawrence MacAulay and Manitoba

Agriculture, Food and Rural Development Minister Ron Kostyshyn have announced a government investment of nearly \$380,000 in the potato processing plant of McCain which produces about 430 million pounds of Manitoba-grown potatoes a year increase efficiency, reduce waste and support the sustainable growth of Manitoba's potato industry.

The governments' investment, provided under Manitoba's Growing Forward 2 Growing Value program, will be used to install new and innovative equipment at the McCain Foods Canada's facility. The upgrades will reduce potato and canola oil waste by 900,000 pounds and 800,000 pounds per year, respectively.

The governments' investment represents half of the total equipment cost. McCain Foods Canada has invested more than \$30 million in other upgrades to the Carberry facility over the last 10 years, including a \$23 million waste water upgrade. This potato processing plant employs about 220 people, with another 10 positions to be created over the next three years as a result of the new equipment.

NETHERLANDS

Better quality thanks to new electronic clod separator

With offices in the Netherlands, Germany and Canada, Prinsen Agricultural & Handling Solutions specializes in post-harvest processing technology. The family enterprise deals with



development and supply of bespoke machines. Think of harvesting, sorting, weighing, packaging and palletizing of products like potatoes, onions and carrots. Recently, Prinsen added a new machine to its product range: the electronic stone and clod separator "Agrisep". The Agrisep can be used for both unwashed and washed potatoes, but also for other products, like onions or carrots. Frank Prinsen notes that at the moment, there is a lot of interest in this machine. "The Agrisep works on infrared light, measuring the humidity of the objects on the supply belt. That way, it distinguishes between organic and inorganic material," he explains. "The clods and stones among the potatoes or onions are sorted in a product-friendly manner."

At least 80 to 90% of the clods and stones are detected by the camera. The gentle treatment of the produce is a particular plus, he says. "This results in a higher quality. In addition, this machine requires less manual labour, which will eventually lead to saving money."

The Agrisep comes in different versions, and has a capacity of 10 to 50 tonnes per hour. "It's really a hot item. Quality is becoming ever more important, and with an electronic clod separator, you can make a difference."

NEWZEALAND

Tasman Berries showing signs of growth despite of storm

Despite storms the Tasman Berry growers are expected to go through a busy season. Tasman Bay Berries owner Maree Holland says, "They are still assessing the impact of the storms, but definitely have enough berries for the busy holiday season." "It's hard to tell the impact at this stage, especially when it's so busy," she further added. "But definitely have enough for Christmas orders, enough for our shop and enough for hand picking."

"The fruit in the region has generally done well throughout 2015, so there is hope for a similar outcome this time around." "There have been pockets of damage for us," Mrs Holland says. "But

we're still going and have a busy season ahead of us." Tasman Bay Berries is a popular destination for handpicking berries, and is gearing up for another busy summer season.

According to her the berries are great, really beautiful and juicy, so it's looking like a good season in that regard. "Tasman Bay Berries have 44 Hectares of boysen berries and two hectares of raspberries, sold commercially and directly to consumers. They are currently busy running events for Christmas, including two event days on the 23rd and 24th of December, with a bouncy castle, live music and more on their farm."

PERU

Avocado exports top 280 million dollars

Peruvian Avocado saw a slight decline in exports which totaled 282.75 million dollars FOB between January and November 2015 to last year, when the value of shipments overseas reached 306.2 million dollars. The Dutch market was the largest importer of Peruvian avocados after making purchases worth 105.87 million dollars FOB. It was followed by the United States (78.25 million dollars), Spain (46.53 million dollars), the UK (29.8 million dollars), Chile (12.74 million dollars) and Costa Rica (3.15 million dollars). Camposol SA was the main Peruvian avocado exporter between January and November 2015, with sales totaling 34.56 million dollars. It was followed in the ranking by Agrícola Cerro

Prieto SAC, with shipments totaling 30 million dollars, Sociedad Agrícola Drokasa (28.37 million dollars), Consorcio de Producción de Fruta SA (20.73 million dollars), Agropecuaria Las Lomas de Chilca SA (16.14 million dollars) and Corporación Frutícola de Chincha SAC (12.18 million dollars). Also, the highest turnover from avocado sales overseas was achieved in June, after reaching a FOB amount of \$ 65.6 million.

SPAIN

Organic Tomato acreage growing in Andalusia

Tomatoes are the most important protected vegetable crop in Andalusia, accounting for 54.4 % of the total acreage devoted to organic production in green houses. It has seen an expansion in the organic tomato by about 66.3% compared to previous year, according to data from the Prices and Markets Observatory of the Council of Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development of the Government of Andalusia, consulted by Hortoinfo. Most organic tomatoes are grown in Almería, with 303.57 hectares, 86.6 percent of the total. Granada has 28 hectares (8%) and Malaga 18.22 hectares (5.2%).

The average price at origin during the 2014/2015 campaign for all types of organic tomatoes stood at 1.067 Euro per kilo, 40.4 % more than conventional tomatoes, which reached 0.76 Euro per kilo. By types, long life organic tomatoes reached an average price of 0.72 Euro per



kilo, compared with 0.45 for the conventional. Organic pear tomatoes were marketed at an average price of 0.73 Euro per kilo, compared with 0.47 of the conventional. The most reduced type of organic tomatoes has been that on the vine, with 45% of the total. The main markets for the organic tomatoes produced in Andalusia have been the European markets, most notably Germany, followed by the United Kingdom and Switzerland.

Processing of Piquillo peppers of Lodosa

Canned products are considered essential in any pantry. They are one of those affordable luxuries that, perhaps because of their moderate price and our being accustomed to seeing them on the shelves, we do not fully appreciate. Canned vegetables also deserve the spotlight. While the autumn and winter are usually associated with a quiet period in agriculture, this is far from the truth in Navarra, where the pepper, chard, asparagus and artichoke seasons take place in succession.

Higher than 30 degrees Celsius, the plant. When it comes to red Piquillo peppers with a Designation of Origin of Lodosa, the harvesting is carried out manually when the pepper has reached the perfect size (8 to 10 centimetres) and a deep red colour. There are also green peppers, which are actually more easily digested, as well as streaked ones, but they are not included in the PDO.

This pepper variety has two or three sides and ends in a point, which gives it its name (piquillo = little point). The

plants yield about 15,000 kilos per hectare, and due to them severely exhausting land, the grower needs to let the field rest every 2 or 3 years and switch to other crops. It is harvested in several stages to ensure the optimum ripeness of these peppers that need heat and sun, but not too much; with temperatures does not perform well.

Once in the canning facilities, the process of roasting and peeling the peppers is also done manually. Even though the productivity level has made it necessary to introduce some mechanised processes, in the end dozens of women are the ones in charge of peeling, selecting and canning the best ones. Unlike what happens with canned fish in oil, this product does not change over time. Its consumption is recommended within about 5 years after the date of packaging which, as we have seen, takes place shortly after they have been harvested from the field. Regarding their taste, the truth is that Piquillo peppers do not need much introduction. The list of recipes (raw, with a little oil, stuffed as part of a dish, to make sauces, like ketchup, etc) is endless, although the to-do list includes coming up with some more.

In any case, and as usually happens when we become aware of all the work needed for a product like this, it is easy to see that the price is actually very moderate; it seems almost a bargain. Since we spend so much time insisting on the fact that the basis of good cooking is the quality of the raw materials, we can be sure that there's nothing better than going for products like this one.

UNITED STATES

Organic farmers could save the world

One of the speakers at the 36th annual Ecological Farming Conference in California Attended by 900 farmers emphasized that they should now focus more on how changing the way farmers grow may help save this planet's oceans and Earth, itself. "The largest contributor to [carbon dioxide] admissions is industrial agriculture," said John Roulac, founder and chief executive officer of Nutiva, one of the world's top-growing organic food manufacturers. "People think it's cars" that are the top contributors to carbon dioxide in the air, but greenhouse gasses released in the manufacturing of synthetic fertilizers for farming are bigger problems," Roulac said.

He further explained that plants aren't capturing that carbon in the air and using it to build their root systems and instill nutrients into the ground a process called "carbon sequestration."

Organic farming techniques tend to promote sequestration, as organic farms tend to grow more crops on their land over the course of a year, so there are fewer periods of bare farm land. Roulac said no-organic or "conventional" farmers can adopt similar techniques or other methods such as planting grass between rows of trees in orchards to promote sequestration. And if enough farmers do this, he said, it could significantly slow damage caused by carbon dioxide to plankton which provides about two thirds of Earth's oxygen and sustains sea life. Certainly, 2 % isn't a big ratio compared to conventional farming, but the demand for organics isn't showing signs of slowing down. Some at the conference noted that though many farmers aren't ready to discard their chemicals and shift fully to organic farming, many are adopting some organic methods and using more ecologically friendly chemicals.

Organic carrot market "worst in 20 years"

Growers in the regions has reported that supply of organic carrots have gone



down and considers it the worst shortage of organic carrots in last 20 years. Lichtenberg, Director of Purchasing with Earl's Organic Produce, says that California organics in general have been facing supply shortages this year, but adds that the organic carrot situation is particularly acute. "I'd say right now I'm getting 15% of what I need, and I think that's true of any organic carrot buyer in the country."

Lichtenberg says that the shortage began in December, and has continued through January. "It's been that way for a month." As a result, prices has gone up by almost 20% to 25%. According to Lichtenberg, FOB prices are the highest his company has on record since switching to computerized records in 1998.

Lichtenberg, whose San Francisco-based company is currently sourcing carrots from the Coachella valley and Madraera, is unable to pinpoint the reason or reasons for the shortage. He speculates, however, that holiday demand and weather have contributed to the problem. "I'm assuming there were some really heavy pulls for Christmas, some really heavy pulls for Thanksgiving," says Lichtenberg. "And then there was some cold weather that hit." He adds that early signs of a shortage might have made problems worse, as growers may have started pulling crops ahead of schedule to keep up with demand. Lichtenberg also notes that the organic juicing industry has seen major growth in the past few years, which has heavily increased demand on organic carrots, putting pressure on the market.

UGANDA

Uganda's blight resistant GMO potatoes prove a success

In Uganda, losses due to potato late blight reach up to 60%, forcing farmers to spray fungicides up to 15 times to protect their crops. About 300,000 small-holder households grow potatoes for their subsistence living and income generation. Losses due to late blight represents between 10-25% of their revenue from potato.



A field trial on genetically modified (GM) potatoes resistant to potato blight was conducted in Uganda from October 2015 to January 2016 and the varieties have proved a success. Twelve highly resistant GM potatoes of 'Desiree' and one of 'Victoria' varieties from the International Potato Center (CIP) showed extreme levels of resistance compared to the non-GM plants of the same varieties.

The trial was conducted at the Kachwekano Zonal Agricultural Research and Development Institute (KaZARDI) of the National Agricultural Research Organization (NARO) near Kabale. Using genetic transformation, three resistance (R) genes from wild relatives (*Solanum bulbocastanum*, and *S. venturii*) were transferred into farmers' preferred varieties and the results are encouraging.

Some partially resistant varieties exist, but these are not preferred by farmers and consumers. This first observation of zero-fungicide potatoes marks an important milestone in the development and future deployment of biotech potato varieties to farmers in Africa that will significantly reduce losses and cost of production.

SPAIN

Control measures for citrus greening

The Council of Ministers approved a royal decree for the launch of the National Programme for the control and eradication of *Triozomyia* and the

national prevention program. This program is prepared and adopted in case of the detection of bacteria, the vector or both and movement restrictions have been established. The program is committed to detect the disease and effective actions have been set to prevent the possible spread of these pests in our country. These insects can carry the bacterium that causes citrus greening (also known as Huanglongbing or HLB); a serious disease affecting these crops in other countries.

Given the importance of the disease, the new royal decree includes a monitoring program focused on sensitive crops, in which attention is paid to the possible entry points. Furthermore, it articulates the eradication and control program to adopt in case of detection, depending on different situations (presence of bacteria, the vector or both) and establishes restrictions on the movement of plant material to prevent the spread of the pest in case it first appears in nurseries. These measures complement those already in force at EU level, which were implemented responding to Spain's demands to prevent the entry of these harmful organisms in Europe. With the approval of the new royal decree, legal support is given to all previously published action and contingency plans against the *Triozomyia*, Citrus greening and *Diaphorinacitri* for the implementation of harmonized rules for the control and prevention of these organisms. This shows a commitment to early detection and effective actions to prevent the possible spread of these pests in our country. ♦