

AUSTRALIA

Almonds are the largest export crop

Almonds are now Australia's largest horticultural export crop, as this year's harvest is estimated at 70,000 tons, which will see Australia overtake Spain as the world's second largest almond producer.



Global demand for almonds has doubled in the past ten years. The industry, growing as it is, should reach over 90,000 tonnes by 2017.

Ross Skinner, chief executive of the Almond Board of Australia, says if consumption continues to rise at its current rate of 5% annually, global demand will outstrip supply beyond 2014.

The almond industry's increasing profitability, and its requirement for water to expand its plantings, makes the Sunraysia irrigation area a prospective growth area for the industry.

Mr. Skinner says India is Australia's largest market for almonds, and its fastest growing. India usually purchases the almonds in their shells.

The increasing dominance of large agribusinesses in horticulture suggests any further expansion will be at the expense of moribund horticultural industries and small family businesses.

Australia's largest pomegranate operation ends

The largest pomegranate orchard in the southern hemisphere has harvested its final crop.

In 2006 PMG Agriculture planted more than 120,000 pomegranate trees on



a farm near Condobolin in central west New South Wales but its owner Paul McLaughlin stated that an unfortunate run of events including drought, disease and the dollar had forced them to sell up.

He further added that it's a combination of a few things but the conclusion is that the pomegranate orchard has not produced a profit in the last few years despite of large investment in that particular orchard. The disease remains unknown.

BANGLADESH

Asparagus exports show potential

Asparagus has a potential to become an export item for Bangladesh. Two years ago, Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University (SBAU), carried out experimental production of asparagus with success.

"We brought asparagus seed from Japan and planted it in the university's research field. New spores have grown from the bottom of the plant. If we can develop the seed locally, then this vitamin and protein-rich vegetable can be cultivated across the country," scientists involved in the research revealed. The chief of the research team Dr. A Foez M Zamal, Horticulture Department, SBAU



said this is the first experiment to develop the seed of asparagus in the country. He says the vegetable can be cultivated in almost all regions in the country and that there is export potential to the EU, the US and Japan.

Bangladesh capitalizes on fast-growing rice variety

Farmers in Bangladesh are likely to get a new variety of rice seeds within next year that will mature in 105 days or three-and-a-half months, the quickest among all the varieties currently out on the fields.

The rice seed, which will be suitable for cultivation during the aman season, was developed by Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI) through hybridisation of a local rice variety with the high-yielding BRRI Dhan-39.

Mr. Mohammad Alamgir Hossain, a BRRI scientist who has been involved in the seed's development stated that the grain quality will also be fine and the yield would be similar to those of the existing short-duration high-yield variety seeds—BRRI Dhan-33 and BINA-7.

BRRI Dhan-33 matures in 118 days, while BINA-7, developed by Bangladesh Institute of Nuclear Agriculture (Bina), matures in 110-120 days — both a month earlier than BR-11, the preferred variety for the aman season.

The two short-duration rice crops help farmers fight seasonal hunger or munga and mitigate the risks of crop losses from natural disasters, such as floods and cyclone.

He further added that more importantly, they have widened scope for farmers to grow potato, mustard, wheat or vegetables, and thus have contributed to increasing crop intensity and overall agricultural production.

Mr. Wais Kabir, executive chairman of Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC) stated that the shorter duration varieties are surely gaining popularity. They let farmers add a new crop to their annual cultivation plan, providing a new channel to increase their income.

National Seed Board gave approval to the seed, considering the necessity to



raise agricultural production through increased crop intensity. Thus farmers may get the seed within next year after all necessary formalities are complete, Kabir of BARC said.

The new rice variety, expected to be named BRRI Dhan-62, will have 9% protein and 18-20 parts per million zinc contents after milling, higher than those of the already popular high-yield seeds.

The better zinc content will help reduce micronutrient deficiency among children, while the increased protein will be good for the poor who get 58% of their protein requirements from rice.

MEXICO

Pests threaten 40,000 hectares of citrus production

At least seven different kinds of pests, in addition to drought threaten 40,000 hectares of citrus in the downtown area of Tamaulipas (Mexico). The citrus growers are warning that, among other pests, producers are concerned about the fruit fly, aphid Coffee, Mealybug and citrus tristeza virus. Although there is no record of an outbreak so far, growers in the state are concerned and are asking that phytosanitary measures be doubled so that fruits infected by these pests do not enter Tamaulipas.



In this regard Humberto Ramírez Vázquez, Federal Plant Protection Deputy, said that for the time being Tamaulipas is free of these pests, because of the preventive health actions that are performed.

What's alarming about the situation is that, for example, the Yellow Dragon, currently affects citrus trees of Baja California Sur, Campeche, Chiapas, Colima, Hidalgo, Jalisco, Michoacan, Nayarit, Quintana Roo, San Luis Potosi, Sinaloa and Yucatán, and has already caused devastating damage. Fortunately, the bacterium hasn't developed yet in the state.

The Yellow Dragon is eradicated by spraying chemical insecticides and paraffin oils, which interfere with the insects' metabolism and controls their reproduction without creating resistance.

This pest represents the most serious threat to the 550,000 acres of citrus established in 23 states of the Mexican Republic.

But, he assured, the vector (aphid coffee) that emits the virus hasn't been detected in the Tamaulipas citrus area; whereas, in the southeast of the country, it has been detected in the states of Veracruz, Tabasco, Campeche, Plates, and Yucatán.

Low vegetable prices- A concern

Mexico's vegetable markets had been marked by variability over the past few weeks, but in the case of tomatoes, the prices have been notoriously low which is a cause of concern in the agricultural sector.

Carlos Alberto Esquer López, the president of the Association of Vegetable Producers of Yaqui and Mayo stated that the tomatoes were not the only crop affected, but potatoes were as well, as a result of the damage caused by frosts earlier this year. He affirmed that practically every crop was approaching the end of its cycle hence the producers are getting ready for the final harvests, mainly of tomatoes and chillies.

He further added that despite the likelihood of water availability problems



for the next cycle, a similar acreage to last year is expected to be planted, which was of 9,000 hectares and that water was not a big issue for them as most vegetables are irrigated through pressurized systems designed to save and make more efficient use.

GERMANY

Slow market for lettuce

The current demand for lettuce is exceedingly small in Germany, says the German Agramarket Informations-Gesellschaft (AMI) on its website. This is not only the case in Germany, but also in other European countries. For this reason, prices, both in Belgium and in France, have declined further.

Belgium in particular has been stepping up as a strong supplier, now with heavier crops of +500g. The free delivery prices for crops of +350g are already well below the limit of 5.00 Euro per case of 12 pcs.

Week 9 witnessed a few discount actions involving common lettuce in the German food trade. The average sales are still clearly higher, especially compared to that of iceberg lettuce. For this reason, no major increase in sales volumes is expected.





INDIA

Red potato success story in Gujarat

Farmers who experimented with cultivation of red potato in Deesa and its surrounding areas three years ago stand to reap rich returns. A prolonged winter and scientific guidance has helped achieve a good harvest this season. The variety was only introduced during 2010.

One such farmer P J Chaudhary of Dangiyi village is expecting an output of more than 27 tonnes per acre this year. He is looking forward to a gross income of Rs 2.45 crores. "For the last two years, we have been reaping rich dividends from this new variety. The potato gets its name from its red outer skin. It fetches a price of Rs 12 per kg in the market while traditional ones are sold at Rs 9 per kg. The prime purchasers are potato chips and wafer producing companies," Chaudhary said.

Director of research at Sardarkrushinagar Dantiwada Agricultural University R L Patel said, "Chaudhary has come out as a role model as far as production of red potatoes is concerned. We found that not only do these potatoes have less water content, which is ideal for wafers, but they are also low in sugar content." The entire red potato cultivation is carried out through sprinkle irrigation system in the region. There are around 50 farmers who have planted this red potato variety.

India Basmati Rice gains market share in Saudi Arabia

Rice is the staple in Saudi Arabia with an annual per capita consumption of

around 42 kilograms, but the country has to rely completely on rice imports to meet the domestic requirement of about 1.14 million tons per year. Overall rice consumption in Saudi Arabia is likely to increase in future, according to the USDA.

While U.S. long grain rice is well known in Saudi Arabia, consumers' preference has shifted to the basmati varieties in recent years, with Indian rice exports benefitting the most, says the USDA. In 2012-13, rice imports by Saudi Arabia are expected to be around 1.2 million tons, and imports are expected to increase by around 3% in 2013-14.



India's share in the Saudi market in 2012-13 increased to 72%. During January to November 2012, India exported about 796,239 tons of rice to Saudi Arabia, up about 9% from around 730,589 tons in the full year 2011-12, when India's share in the Saudi rice market stood at around 64%, according to USDA data. From 2011-12 to 2012-13, the share of the U.S. in the Saudi market declined from 13% to 10%, of Pakistan from 11% to 9%, and of Thailand from 8% to 6%.

Mango production decreases

Production of mangoes in Maharashtra's Konkan region has dropped drastically in 2012 as compared to previous years according to the two social organisations working in the coastal area.

The production of various varieties of mango in the region



had been showing a downward trend since 2010. It was 3.20 lakh MT in 2010, 2.56 lakh MT in 2011 and 1.23 Lakh MT in 2012 respectively.

The output is likely to be around 1.28 Lakh MT in the current year stated the Konkan authorities.

They added that the production had been adversely affected on account of various reasons, including non-seasonal rains and global warming.

Since eight years, the Sanskar and Konkan Vikas Parishad regions have been organizing a 'Mango Festival' in Thane and other parts of Mumbai to enable farmers to directly sell their produce to the end consumer.

This year the festival will be organized from 1st to 9th May 2013.

ITALY

Unitec to highlight new post-harvest technologies

On the 14th to 15th of March 2013, Unitec spa, a company specialised in the design and manufacture of high-technology machinery and systems for the processing, selection and packaging of over 35 types of fresh fruit and vegetables, will



be one of the speakers at the "Emerging Postharvest Technologies" workshop, organised in Davis (California, USA) by the California agriculture and natural resources division (ANR), the UC Davis postharvest technology center and the UC Davis department of Plant science.

Luca Montanari, vice president of Unitec, will intervene with a lecture on the "Use of non-destructive sensors in Europe", during which he will explain the guidelines for the development of new technologies in light of the efficiency and profitability needs of packing stations and of an ever-evolving global market.

EUROPE

"Fruit and vegetable sector defines itself more and more in packaging"

Smart Packaging Solutions (SPS) is a business unit from VPK Packaging Group N.V. The company is specialised in the production and supply of solid board. Smart Packaging Solutions supplies packaging for meat, poultry, fruit and vegetables, fish and flowers. This year the brand Smart Packaging Solutions would have been active in the market for five years.

VPK started producing solid board in Oudegem, in 1989. This was part of the growth trajectory of the group. In 2008 a second plant was started in Meer, after the takeover of the bankrupt R&F Folding Boxes. From that moment on the solid board department of VPK Packaging wanted to take over the market with its own brand name, and so Smart Packaging Solutions was born. Now the two locations produce 75,000 tonnes of solid board packaging together, with 240 employees in total.



Fruit Logistica meets expectations

Fruit Logistica lived up to high expectations. Held from 8th to 10th February in Berlin, Fruit Logistica attracted the industry's major decision-makers, excellent reviews from exhibitors and trade visitors regarding the commercial results at the trade fair, and an increased number of trade visitors. More than 58,000 trade visitors from 130 countries came to learn more about products and services spanning the entire fresh produce value chain and to gain a global overview of the market. Around 80% of the visitors came from outside Germany. Exhibitors and trade visitors alike praised the excellent contacts to wholesalers and retailers, fruit and vegetable growers, importers and exporters. Key representatives from the world of agricultural policy came to Berlin, including twelve ministers of agriculture. Some 750 media representatives from 37 countries reported on site at the exhibition venue.



Dr. Christian Göke, Chief Operating Officer for Messe Berlin GmbH, commented: "Hardly any other industry worldwide has a trade fair with such an indisputable leading position as Fruit Logistica. The outstanding features of this year's Fruit Logistica were the international scope of the trade fair, the high degree of decision-making authority of industry representatives, the global market overview in the exhibition area and the presentation of the produce sector's great innovative strength."

Trade visitors at the world's leading fresh produce trade fair voted "Apfel-Schiffchen®" into second place. Elbe-Obst Vertriebs GmbH (Germany) developed these ship-shaped apple slices. A new drying technique guarantees crispness and prevents browning. Third place went to Tozer Seeds Ltd. (UK) for "Flower Sprout TM", a cross between Brussels



sprouts and kale with green and purple frilly leaves.

USA

China halts US citrus shipments

China's regulatory authorities informed the US Department of Agriculture's Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) that they would not be issuing phytosanitary certificates for shipments from the US to China which was ought to commence on April 18, which would effectively halt citrus exports to China.

The California Citrus Quality Control Council (CCQC) was informed by APHIS that China's phytosanitary regulatory authorities, the General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine (AQSIQ), would not be issuing phytosanitary certificates for US shipments of citrus after 11:50 PM on April 17, the reason given by AQSIQ in a letter to APHIS was that 6 shipments bound for China were found to contain a quarantine disease not found in China. Fruit currently in transit will be evaluated to see if it can enter the Chinese market. The ban comes right after the window for exports to China had opened.

Mr. Dan Kass, director of export sales for Paramount Citrus stated that the window for California navels in China is normally good from mid-April to early June and since local Chinese navels are finished they would work with industry organizations to resolve this issue

He further added that he was not sure as to how long the ban will be in effect but the CCQC reported that they would be working with industry partners to resolve the issue and open the Chinese market as soon as possible. ♦