

Murray Valley Citrus Board Newsletter



10 July 2012

Transition Arrangement for new Board

Governments in Victoria and New South Wales are currently finalising statutory processes for the establishment of a new Murray Valley Citrus Board under the *Agricultural Industry Development Act 1990*. These processes are expected to be completed by the end of July 2012.

In the interim, the existing Murray Valley Citrus Board will operate in a 'caretaker' capacity to ensure there is an orderly transition to the new Board and continued delivery of services to industry. This includes ensuring that producers are adequately informed of the progress of all existing, approved projects.

MVCB Consultative Meeting

The board would like to thank those growers who attended the consultative meeting last week and provided valuable feedback about the plan of operations for 2012-13. The operational plan and budget will be finalised when the new Board is in place.

DNE Australian citrus imports jump by 50 percent with outstanding quality

Last year, the United States lost out on a large percentage of the Australian citrus crop due to more-favorable markets in Southeast Asia. This year, the Australians are back in full force, with a 50-percent increase in citrus shipped to the United States, according to Stu Monaghan, national sales manager for DNE World Citrus Sales in Stuart, FL.

The first Australian vessel arrived in Long Beach, CA, June 22; by July 6, the third was already scheduled to dock.

"We're going to have a bigger program for Australia this year — volume on Navels is up 250,000 cartons from half-a-million last year shipped to the U.S.," Mr. Monaghan said. "That'll be complemented by our Daisies and Minneolas, our Cara Caras, our clementines and blood oranges."

Early arrivals have shown outstanding flavor and external appearance, Mr. Monaghan said, and the fruit is larger than last year as well, peaking on 56s, followed by 72s then 48s.

"We should have a very high-quality season in terms of eating and appearance," Mr. Monaghan said. "The conditions leading up to our season have been ideal, a relatively mild summer with enough rainfall to size up the fruit and cool nights to really bring on color — we can't ask for more. It's just been ideal."

Australian citrus usually has the West Coast market to itself this time of year, but some California growers are still in production, though Mr. Monaghan said the quality of the domestic fruit is inconsistent "so there were some retailers starting up Australian as soon as we had fruit available. We're getting more and more retailers coming onboard each day even though there's a lot of California product left to ship. It's a question of quality over quantity."

California retailers are making the switch to Australian product despite a premium price.

"The standards the retailers hold their shippers to do not change during the year. You have a very low tolerance for defects on what you ship, the product has got to be good," Mr. Monaghan said. "Australian Navels didn't have a single problem reported last year and it's so far, so good this year."

Mr. Monaghan said every single lot of Australian Navels inspected to-date has passed with flying colors. "The fruit has got to be very good to make the trip," he said. A successful summer citrus season "starts with quality and we sure have it this year."

Source: *The Produce News* July 06, 2012

California Citrus Tree Infected with HLB

For the first time, a citrus tree in Southern California was found to be infected with a disease that could wipe out citrus plants across the state.

The infected lemon tree was found a few weeks ago in Los Angeles County. California's nearly \$2 billion citrus industry is now in jeopardy. Ted Bakin, President of Californian Citrus Research Centre said, "There's no known cure for the disease in the tree, once the tree's infected, it's toast."

The disease causes leaves to look unusually yellow and is called huanglongbing or HLB. It is a bacteria transmitted by the tiny insect known as the Asian citrus psyllid. Transmission starts when a psyllid feeds on an infected tree and then spreads the infection to a healthy tree. The bacteria starve the tree by blocking nutrients. Eventually the fruit stops maturing and stays bitter, inedible and often becomes misshapen.

California's citrus industry ranks number one in the US in terms of value, number two in terms of production. Eighty percent of fresh market oranges come from California, making it USA's main source.

"Our strategy is to test as many of the psyllids as we can capture," said Batkin.

So far, no infected psyllids have been detected in San Diego County, even though the state's first insects were discovered in the county in 2008. "That doesn't mean that they're infected, but if you have the psyllid, then it's possible," he said."

Florida's citrus industry has been devastated by HLB, losing more than 150,000 acres in four years, according to Batkin. That's about 10 to 15 percent of its trees every year.

Source: <http://www.kpbs.org/news/2012/jul/04>