

### CANADA

#### New shelf-life extension product lines

At this year's Canadian Produce Marketing Association from 15th to the 17th of April in Montreal, Canada, FOOD freshly, innovator in shelf-life extension solutions, will present the company's new line of Freshness Retainer products. For the first time this family-owned company has developed a one product solution for the fresh-cut industry where customers will be able to use one product to cover a variety of both fruits and vegetables. Customers now have the choice to use one product on apples and other fruits as they would on carrots and other vegetables. In addition to O Plus Bio, FOOD freshly will present O Plus Lettuce, a shelf-life solution for all of your leafy greens. Like all FOOD freshly products, these new freshness retainers are made from vitamins and minerals.



They are processed into a white powder form through gentle, physical methods. All are free from chlorine, sulfite, GMO's, and from heavy metals such as copper, manganese, iron, aluminum, zinc, and lithium. "All of our product lines serve the growing demand for shelf-life extenders free of sulfites.

The fresh-cut food industry can now offer their customers complete safe and healthy, ready to eat fruits and vegetables." Margaret Tomaszewska, Account Executive FOOD freshly North America, Inc. FOOD freshly products do not impact the flavour or colour of the fresh-cut produce. Through a simple application of spraying or dipping the product can be mixed directly into clean process water.

### CHILE

#### More than 100,000 tons of cherries exported

The Fruit Exporters Association of Chile AG, ASOEX, and the Committee of Cherries were satisfied with the record of shipments reached during the current season of Chilean cherry exports 2014-2015. It is expected that the campaign will end with exports of about 100,000 tons.



In this regard, Ronald Bown, president of ASOEX, said: "We are pleased with this new achievement for the Chilean fruit industry export, it shows the great work that producers and exporters of cherries have made to achieve significant volumes maintaining high standards of quality and safety."

As Bown mentioned that, Chile had exported more than 21 million boxes, which amounts to more than 99,000 tons, to different target markets in the first five weeks of 2015, i.e. 45% more than in the same period last season.

"This has been a very challenging season because of the large volume of cherries there was and the weather conditions during the campaign (December 2014) made the industry pay more attention to quality care after the rains ensuring a consistent product at destination," said Cristian Tagle, chairman of ASOEX's Cherries.

### CHINA

#### Stricter checks for food imports from China needed

The increasing import of foods and organic products from China means EU checks need to be improved, according to the German minister of Agriculture Christian Schmidt, reports the German

website Lebensmittel Praxis.de. "The dynamic of the market is bringing us to a point where the current checks are no longer sufficient," the minister said during a visit in Peking last Tuesday. Schmidt said that China wants to help develop standards and certification, which will have to meet more demands in the future. Imports from China are currently the most criticised within the European warning system for dangerous foods (RASFF).

### EGYPT

#### "Market oranges and limes improving"

"The Egyptian orange season is going very well at the moment," says Joey Deen of Denimpex. "After the Navels, for which we received reasonable prices, we're now busy with the Valencias. For the Valencias, things started out a bit rough, but now we're seeing people starting to switch to Egypt. That's because the Greek season is over, and the quality in Spain is declining because of rainfall." He updated that the availability in the bigger sizes (48/56/64) is somewhat limited. "Good prices are made for those as well now. Of the mid-sizes (72/80/88), normal volumes are available. These are a bit cheaper as well, and sell for around 50 cents less than the bigger sizes. The smallest sizes (100/113) are available in abundance, and are sold at lower prices."

Joey further said: "The Eastern European countries traditionally make the switch around Easter, going for the larger volumes. The Western European supermarkets generally try to continue with Spanish citrus." He says different qualities are circulating in the market. "Our oranges are well-received by all customers. They are sweet and full of juice".



"The lime market has also improved a bit, fortunately," Joey says. "The very limited availability of Mexican volumes results in a market with an almost exclusive availability of Brazilian produce. Since it's raining in Brazil as well, they cannot ship large volumes there either. Still, the export figures are roughly equal to the same period last year."

### **FRANCE**

#### **French apples to United States**

French apples are once again available in the United States, after a long absence from the market. Blue Whale, a supplier of French tree fruit, sent their first shipments of French apples and pears earlier this year.



"We're the first French company to do this in more than 20 years," said Marc Peyres of Blue Whale. Cooperative des Vergers d'Anjou and Bureau du Val de Loire (BVL) have been working hard on bringing French apples to the U.S. for quite some time, but working out the protocols necessary to break into the U.S. market has taken a lot of work. With Vergers d'Anjou and BVL join Blue Whale; Blue Whale finalized the deal this year. It's a difficult thing to do, note Peyres, and that's why no one has done it in so long.

"It's a risky thing because it's so complicated," explained Peyres, "but now we're here, and we think we can make it easier." Three containers of apples and two containers of pears made it already to the U.S. earlier this month and with containers still on the way, Blue Whale has sent 8 containers of apples and 4 containers of pears in total. Though it's a small shipment, it still carries a lot of risk due to the amount of time and effort placed into the project. Peyres thinks their presence in

the U.S. can grow, but he's careful to work in a methodical manner to make sure their foray into the United States is successful.

The next step for Blue Whale, noted Peyres, is to open up even more markets to European shippers. The next targets include Mexico and Australia. Both countries currently aren't importing French apples, but, with a lot of work, Peyres thinks they, too, can become receptive markets.

### **FLORIDA**

#### **Exclusive deal Village Farms and Florida Organic Farms**

Florida are pleased to announce an exclusive distribution agreement between Village Farms International Inc. (VFF.TSX) with US headquarters in Heathrow, Florida and Florida Organic Farms Int. LLC. located in Okeechobee. Village Farms is a progressive vertically integrated food company focused on growing, marketing, and distributing its branded fruits and vegetables to retailers throughout the United States and Canada. Florida Organic Farms Int. LLC is a USDA certified organic farm that grows organically in Florida. For the first time Village Farms has partnered with another farmer to offer organic produce under one of the Company's labels. According to Michael A. DeGiglio, President & CEO of Village Farms, "We are happy to be able to offer our customers local US organically grown produce."

Village Farms will offer USDA certified organic fruits and vegetable to its customers beginning in the Fall of this year. "This is a great opportunity for Florida Organic Farms to offer its organically grown products to retailers to meet the ever increasing demand for this consumer growth segment", said Joseph J. Rieger, Founder & CEO of Florida Organic Farms Int. LLC. He finished

#### **Orange crop 2014-2015 estimate holds steady**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) said its estimate of the 2014-2015 Florida orange crops remained the

same at 103 million boxes. The USDA held early-mid and Valencia orange varieties at 48 million and 55 million boxes respectively. "We still have a few months left in the season but it is good to see the estimate stabilize a bit, especially in this challenging environment," said Michael W. Sparks, executive VP/CEO of Florida Citrus Mutual.

He further said, "We are so appreciative of the USDA's announcement yesterday to fund \$30 million worth of additional citrus research. I would like to extend a "thank you" from our entire industry to Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack for all that he's doing to make sure our industry continues to produce healthy citrus products while serving as a strong economic engine to the state of Florida." During the 2013-2014 seasons, Florida produced 104 million boxes of oranges. The USDA's estimate of the 2014-2015 Florida grapefruit crop stayed at 15 million boxes. Specialty citrus decreased to 3.2 million boxes with tangelos accounting for the entire 100,000 box drop. The yield for frozen concentrate orange juice (FCOJ) dropped to 1.57 gallons per 90-pound box.

### **GERMANY**

#### **High prices for South African pears**

Of the overseas pears, mainly Williams Christ and Packham's Triumph were available at the German wholesale markets in week 12. The Flamingo, Rosemarie and Abate Fetel varieties could also be found on the market. There were larger volumes of Abate Fetel from Chile. They did have competition from Italy, since good quality was still coming from there as well. Prices for Rosemarie from



South Africa were highest: 2.18 per kilo, followed by the Flamingo from South Africa at 2.01 per kilo. The Chilean Abate Fetel came in third, at 1.97 per kilo.

Prices for Conference pears were a bit lower in week 12. The Dutch ones yielded the highest price, 89 cents per kilo, followed by the Belgian ones at 88 cents. There was a difference in price compared to last year. Then, 1.07 was offered for the Belgian ones, and 1.03 per kilo for the Dutch ones. Remarkably, the Germans paid less for their 'own' Conference.

### INDIA

#### Improvements in infrastructure bring more opportunities

The infrastructure in India is growing at a rapid pace. The roads are twice as good as they were just three years ago and as a result, grape quantities have grown and are feeding the market. "If someone had been to India just five years back and came back now, they would already see a big difference within the grape sector," says Nagesh Shetty, Director of Deccan Produce.

Along with these changes comes an opportunity for the future, especially when it comes to new grape varieties, which could lead to destinations. Indian farmers have been showing interest in new varieties, an interest which Nagesh Shetty shares.

"New varieties could offer the possibility of being able to offer new colored varieties earlier to East Asian markets. We have been discussing the possibilities with farmers, but I think that it will take some time before we get out of the standard set of Thompson, Black, and Flame seedless and go into a Crimson or Autumn Royal for mainstream export. There has to be a procedure in place, along with giving farmers access to the plants. It will take some time before we get to that point. Of course, we would like to have it happen as soon as possible."

In terms of grape exports, the company does not have a huge presence in the EU, with approximately 50 containers per season. When asked if he would be

interested in expansion within the EU, "It is definitely something we would be interested in, as long as we are able to get some good clients, with firm contracts. We are not really interested in taking unnecessary risks at the moment," Mr. Shetty responded.

### MALAYSIA

#### Malaysian pineapples in demand

Youths are encouraged to go into pineapple farming as demand for fresh pineapples is good especially in overseas markets. Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob said that the ministry was willing to assist them including getting loans from Agro bank if they showed strong interest. "Pineapple farming is lucrative, a smallholder owning a four hectare pineapple farm can earn up to RM5,000 monthly," he said during his working visit to Kulim (M) Bhd's MD2 pineapple plantation in Ulu Tiram Estate here.



Ismail Sabri also witnessed the first shipment of MD2 fresh pineapples under a brand name of "Melita" in a 40-footer container to South Korea from the plantation. "Demand for fresh pineapples in the overseas market is good and we want more smallholders to focus on planting the MD2 pineapple," said Ismail Sabri.

He said the species was suitable for export markets as it was able to withstand long sea journey adding that fresh pineapple commanded good prices in Middle East, Japan, South Korea and Europe.

Meanwhile, Malaysian Pineapple Industry Board (MPIB) director-general Sahdan Salim said that currently there were 809.8ha areas planted with the MD2 pineapple mostly in Johor. He said

in order to cope with the demand of the fresh MD2 in the export markets in years to come, the acreage had to be increased to 2,023ha by 2020.

### PERU

#### Trees will mature in 2017

Ruby Fresh started partnering with Peruvian grower Agro Victoria about three years ago. They planted close to 1,200 acres of the Wonderful variety. This variety is a direct transplant of Ruby Fresh' pomegranate trees in California. Similar to the California fruit, it is high quality and has a deep red color. The trees in Peru have not yet matured and as a result, production is increasing every year. Last year, 12 ocean containers were shipped. "This year, we expect to ship 120-150 ocean containers and we are hoping for 800 - 1,000 containers in 2017 when the trees have reached maturity," Anthony added.

Pomegranates from Peru are available from March until late May, early June. They are sold as whole pomegranates in boxes of 3.8 kg or as aril fruit. When properly refrigerated, they can be held for 90-120 days.

### PORTUGAL

#### "Good demand for red currants"

Berry brothers is one of the largest red berry companies in Europe with a cultivation area of over 70 hectares. The Dutch season is currently coming to an end. Nijs van Zuilen says, "We will have Dutch red berries available until week 16. Then we will continue the season with Chilean Rovada berries, after which we will be



back on the market with new Dutch and own cultivation Portuguese berries in the third week of May,"

Berry brothers grow red berries on 1.5 hectare and blueberries on 3.5 hectares in Portugal, of which most is sold in Portugal and Spain. Around 25% of this harvest is available for the Dutch market. "Berry brothers grow in the north of Portugal, as the ideal climate conditions are there, which means we can start the European season early," says Nijs.

He is very satisfied with the current berry season. "The demand has been good since the start of September until now. Compared to last year the prices have doubled. As less berries were harvested in Europe, there was a lot of demand early on, especially from Italy and Germany. At the moment the market is a bit calmer, but I expect there will still be a revival."

### SPAIN

#### **New strawberry and Raspberry varieties**

The new variety of strawberry Sabrina has been a success in the Mediterranean basin, according to its developer, Planasa. Its market share in the area in just four years stands above 35%. Meanwhile, the Sabrosa-Candongra, after more than 12 years in the market, remains the leading strawberry variety when it comes to quality. The Sahara and Safari are the latest additions to the company's catalogue of strawberry varieties for warm climates. The Sahara was introduced last year and the Safari is the latest launch. "The Safari is an extremely early variety, developed for subtropical climates. It is a very compact plant, which facilitates the harvesting process, and becomes productive from early



November. The results have been amazing this season. It is a variety with great potential," stresses the company.

The development of strawberry varieties in northern Europe is always slower and more complex; however, the early variety Dream is performing spectacularly well in the south of France and the UK, which means there are very good prospects for it. The Dream meets the industry's need for a very early strawberry variety, with high quality and a long shelf life; characteristics which are not easy to find.

### USA

#### **2014 grape, peach crops down**

According to a report issued Monday by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), Grape crop in California's was down 12% from the previous year in 2014. The report further stated that growers reported production was down for all three types of grapes.



Further as by mentioning above that, Hail during the bloom stage negatively impacted some vineyards and drought conditions were also reported as a concern by many growers. According to the USDA, California accounted for 88% of the country's utilized grape production in 2014. In the same report, the agency

noted the 2014 California peach crop was down 5% from 2013 but still represented 74% of all U.S. peach production last year. Peach growers reported the drought situation remained a concern, however many of them were able to offset reduced irrigation district water deliveries by utilizing wells to pump groundwater.

### UNITED KINGDOM

#### **Greater focus on processing, seed production**

As part of its efforts to develop British seed potato exports, the parent organization for the Potato Council UK (AHDB), has undergone a rebranding. As Robert Burns, Head of Seeds and Export, points out, "We are a young organization currently on a journey and haven't quite found out yet what the structure will be. It will probably be an emphasis on passport and concept working, so more functional groupings within the organization."

For Potato Council UK, the main destination remains Egypt, where it achieved record exports this season, with shipments totaling 53,000 tons; 3,000 tons more than in the previous year. "Egypt takes 70-80% of our production, but in order to diversify we are always on the lookout for new markets, and we recently opened up Vietnam and Cuba," said Robert.

Regarding Cuba, a bilateral agreement was signed before the recent political developments with the U.S., and according to Robert, "The country has shown an interest in European varieties, which offers opportunities to explore this market. Cubans will additionally have the chance to import American varieties, which are different from ours."

Diversification is, in any case, inescapable in a global marketplace currently marked by oversupply, with over 200,000 tons more than last year, which has led to volatile pricing. Robert further stressed that "Growers, who have to balance risk, have to be certain that their production is contracted so they can obtain a guaranteed price for it. The problem, perhaps, is that we are too focused on fresh and we have to look more at processing and seed production." ♦