Module 5
Citrus Export Standards

Presenter: Paul Hardman

Introduction

In 1963, the World Health Organisation and the Food and Agriculture Organisation established the Codex Alimentarius Commission. Codex Alimentarius is a Latin term, meaning Food Code, and the commission is often simply referred to simply as ‘Codex’.

Codex is an inter-governmental body with 171 members, as of March 2005. The mandate of Codex is to establish international food standards to ensure food safety and fair practices in the market place. Member countries use these standards to develop their own food safety regulations and legislation.

In South Africa the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries is mainly responsible for developing food safety and quality standards, which they base on the Codex standards.

The Codex standards are only a guideline, and there may be small differences in the legislation and regulations used by its member countries. As citrus exporters, we need to be aware of the South African standards and requirements, and those of the countries we export to.

The CGA often gets calls and requests from growers about what information and what requirements there are for exporting citrus, and what they basically need to comply with.

In this module we are going to look at just some of those aspects of information they need to be aware about and basically what they need to be putting into practice on farms in order to prepare export citrus.
The Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries

The main source of information is the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries website (www.daff.gov.za), where they publish the minimum standards for exports. In order to export any agricultural product one needs to comply with the Agricultural Product Standards Act, 119 of 1990. That is the overarching Act that creates the framework for exporting agricultural products.

Within the Act you then get specific standards and requirements and those relate to specific products. We are dealing with citrus, the citrus standards and requirements, and we are going to even drill down a bit further and look at the soft citrus as just one example of those standards and requirements.

FBO Code

One of the first things that a grower will need before he exports any agricultural product is a food business operator (FBO) code. The Department of Agriculture, DAFF, allocates these codes. To apply for one, you can go to the DAFF website and follow the links to where they allocate codes. But essentially any carton of fruit exported from South Africa needs to have that code on it, without it you cannot export.

Phytosanitary Requirements

In terms of the phytosanitary requirements that growers will need to adhere to when exporting: to find these requirements, follow the IPPC link on the website and there you will see exactly what the requirements are for each market.

Market Requirements – Soft Citrus

Looking at what a soft citrus grower might need to comply with when he looks at the quality standards and the food safety requirements for exporting citrus, essentially there are two parts under the standards and requirements that he needs to be aware of.
The first part relates to general requirements, and these in fact will apply to all citrus fruits. Within those standards they also then start referring to internal and external quality standards. These are then set out in part 2.

It is important that growers understand and apply these requirements because this is what will be used by the Perishable Products Export Control Board (PPECB) inspectors when they come onto the farm and into the packhouse to do inspections. They will follow these requirements very closely and, where you don’t comply, that fruit will be rejected.

**Food Safety**

We will now just briefly look at the food safety aspects that fall into the standards and requirements. When using plant protection products, growers need to adhere to Act 36 regulations, meaning using products that are registered for use within South Africa. Secondly they need to make sure that the usage is in compliance with that Act in order to achieve residue level that comply too the South African maximum residue level legislation.

There is a third aspect that growers need to be aware of if they’re exporting citrus. You need to comply to the importing countries maximum residue level legislation as well. In that sense one needs to know how to change your practices on the farm to adhere to or reach those international targets.

For this purpose the CGA and CRI put together a Recommended Usage Restrictions document, which basically informs how the products needs to be used in order to reach the international requirements.

**Example of Market Requirements**

Just as a last example of the type of requirements that growers need to be aware of in terms of the phytosanitary aspects: each pallet used to palletise cartons needs to have an official stamp on it that clearly indicates that it has been treated under ISPM15 rules.

That is an indication that the pallet is suitable for export. On the DAFF website you can find out what those rules are including what stamp to look for on the pallet.
Export Market Requirements

Overseas buyers have their own specifications concerning the fruit that they want. These specifications are mostly in line with the minimum standards and requirements issued by DAFF, but there might be small differences, such as different internal quality parameters or blemish standards.

The client normally passes his specifications on to the export agent and the export agent in his turn passes it to the packhouse.

Packhouse managers and growers must always be aware of these instructions and specifications in order to ensure that their product is packed and handled correctly. Specific requirements for export countries are also available from the DAFF website.

**Activity 5.1 – Research**

Explain in your own words what the functions of the Perishable Products Export Control Board (PPECB) are. Find at least three examples of things that (PPECB) inspectors might look for or at during an inspection at the packhouse. Now record the examples in your workbook, and explain why you think these inspection points exist.

*(Additional resource reference: Module 33 – PPECB Inspections; www.ppecb.com)*

**Activity 5.2 – Worksheet**

Answer the questions below:

- Explain in your own words what you understand by *maximum residue levels*.
- Why are MRLs important?
- Where can growers and packhouses find more information about MRLs?
- What can a grower do to ensure that MRLs comply with prescribed levels?

**Activity 5.3 – Research Project**

Locate the export market requirement documents for lemons and navels. In a table, make a summary comparing the internal quality standards for the two citrus types.
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