Module 49
Commercial Accreditation Systems

Presenter: Paul Hardman

Introduction

For a grower to export citrus, he has to first of all comply with the export standard for that variety and specific export market. These standards are set by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. In most cases, the grower then also have to comply with the requirements of one or more commercial accreditation schemes, which set standards for food safety and quality, and – in many cases – the management of the production and packing process. These standards assist the grower and packhouse in developing and implementing sound management practices.

Accreditation Systems

British Retail Consortium (BRC)

The first that one we looking at is BRC, British Retail Consortium. In 1998 the retailers in the UK got together and put forward a proposal on food safety systems – a technical document which they could use in all packhouses that they source food from, being packing facilities within the UK as well as all their packing facilities outside of the UK. To a large extent South African packhouses have adopted the BRC standard which is now in its fifth version.

It covers a number of aspects relating to senior management. It insists on a food safety and a quality management plan to ensure that products coming out of that facility are of a consistent and safe quality. It looks at site standards, in other words various aspects of what happens in the packhouse and what pieces of equipment are required to facilitate that process, not only do they look at the product itself, but they look at the process the product goes through.

They follow and track fruit through the facility to see that each aspect does not pose any risk to that fruit.
Finally there is an element within BRC that ensures that there is ongoing training and that the people actually working on the system knows what they are doing and are informed and aware of the implications if they do not perform their duties.

**International Standards**

**Organisation (ISO)**

Next we will be looking at the ISO system. The International Standard Organisation came to a point and where they were approached and asked to provide an international system that would be independent of retailers, growers and essentially being a third party, they were in a position to put a food safety system together.

It is not a certification system as such, but a voluntary approach to managing food safety and quality within the packhouse. There are no audits that are done on the system, but if growers are doing the internal audits and actually following the process, they should have evidence to demonstrate to their trading partners that they have a food safety system in place that can deliver good quality and safe fruit.

**GLOBALGAP**

In terms of what happens on the farm, there are a number of good agricultural practice certification schemes. GLOBALGAP is the most popular widely recognised around the world. In fact, that popularity is only likely to increase now that the Global Food Safety Initiative has recognised GLOBALGAP as the audit scheme that they would prefer growers to adopt.

**Integrated Crop Management Assessment System (ICMAS)**

The final scheme we will be talking about is known as ICMAS, the Integrated Crop Management Assessment System. This tool was designed primarily to assist growers in their process of certification, and it is quite valuable where a grower are implementing a range of schemes and trying to get certification with a number of different bodies.
What the system essentially does is to break down the requirements within those schemes to their simplest form, asking yes/no type questions around each control point and, depending on what answer the grower gives, it qualifies him to be certified at a particular level.

Certification Scheme Focus Areas

Recordkeeping

Recordkeeping is a fundamental part of all schemes and the onus and responsibility falls to the grower to keep good records on every aspect of the farm, particularly when it comes to food safety and the use of plant protection products like pesticides. Those are particularly important areas for recordkeeping where you need thorough records.

Environmental Management

Most of the certification schemes places responsibility on the grower in terms of managing the site and the environment in which he is producing the crop. He needs to make sure that he is not doing any long term or short term damage to his particular site.

Worker Health and Safety

The next common focus that you will find in certification schemes is the need to ensure worker health and safety. There are particular control points that will ensure workers working in the facilities and on the farms are protected during the work they do.

Waste Management

There is also an element of waste management and pollution control that we commonly find in all certification schemes.
Traceability

Probably the critical one is traceability. It is absolutely critical that growers have good traceability systems throughout their processes and that is often linked to the recordkeeping.

Information

Traceability

For more information on traceability, please look at Module 50 – Traceability.

Plant Protection Products

Another key aspect of the schemes is the use and the demonstration that the use of plant protection products is done in a responsible way and in accordance of the requirements of the South African law as well as the requirements of the retailers.

Internal Auditing

Finally, the last aspect that is a common thread throughout these certification schemes is the need to do self-checking and self-auditing.

This is a requirement to ensure that all systems and processes are operating as needed. This is often verified through either spot-checks by external auditors, as well as through full auditing that will be done by a certification body.

Mostly certification bodies would provide a training service as well to help the grower prepare for an audit.
Certification Process

The typical process that a grower follows once he has decided to get certified is to firstly find out what specific accreditations his target buyer might be looking for.

Then he needs to familiarise himself with the requirements for accreditation and apply these on his farm. Once prepared he will do an internal audit and then finally a certification body will hold an external audit.

Within a year of certification, the certification body will audit the farm again, this time unannounced just to make sure that the initial process is still running.

Other Schemes

Apart from the general, commercial accreditation schemes discussed above, there are also a number of private commercial standards that specific importers and buyers have developed, such as Tesco’s Nature’s Choice and Marks and Spencer’s Field to Fork.

For more information on these schemes, please contact your export agent or the relevant buyer.

active learning

Watch the DVD clips, read through the learning material and do workplace research to gather the knowledge and information to complete the assignments below.

Activity 49.1 – Self Assessment

Do research on the internet and find the criteria that a packhouse must comply with to obtain ISO accreditation. Use these criteria to perform a self-audit.

In your workbook, list the criteria, rate the current compliance of your packhouse, and list the actions that the packhouse will have to take to become compliant.

Activity 49.2 – Research Report

Compile a 1-page report indicating what recordkeeping practices are used in your specific area of responsibility to ensure food quality and safety.
Activity 49.1 – Self Assessment

Do research on the internet and find the criteria that a packhouse must comply with to obtain ISO accreditation. Use these criteria to perform a self-audit.

List the criteria below, rate the current compliance of your packhouse, and list the actions that the packhouse will have to take to become compliant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Current compliance</th>
<th>Actions to achieve compliance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Activity 49.2 – Research Report

Compile a 1-page report indicating what recordkeeping practices are used in your specific area of responsibility to ensure food quality and safety.