

CGA Launches Sustainability Help Desk 2010

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Citrus Growers Association has operated the CGA MRL Help Desk for a number of years assisting growers to coordinate and enhance their feedback to buyers, mostly around Food Safety requirements. Given recent trends by retailers (in Europe particularly) to introduce a wider range of Consumer Assurance requirements CGA will also be expanding the scope of the Help Desk.



From January 2011 the CGA Sustainability Help Desk will be up and running. Effectively the Help Desk will be available to Southern African citrus growers seeking assistance with matters including Good Agricultural Practice (e.g. GlobalGAP standards), use of Plant Protection Products (PPPs) and their resultant residues, sustainable citrus production considering key pests and disease threats, ethical trading, carbon footprints and water footprints. CGA has already been active in providing growers with information about these various requirements but will now coordinate this work under the Sustainability Help Desk.

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Growers seeking to improve their sustainability profile should note the official and commercial work being done in the EU to see how this might impact on their day to day operations. Some sustainability concerns and solutions being considered by the Freshfel Environmental Sustainability Workgroup are listed below. As a member of Freshfel (via Fruit South Africa) CGA have been watching EU developments closely. It seems clear from the projects and research below that more needs to be done to convey the appropriate message about sustainability to the consumer. Could it be that attempts to reach the consumer have been

confusing because some entities are seeking to gain competitive advantage using sustainability themes?

Consumer Sustainability Perceptions

Environmentally and socially responsible actions by companies affect the way those companies are perceived. Consumers have different ideas of what is meant by the buzzword "sustainability." It is therefore necessary that sustainable practices are accompanied by credibility and a clear message to consumers. A Deutsche Landwirtschafts-Gesellschaft (DLG) study on sustainability and consumer perception indicates that the various social strata have different perception and level of interest in sustainability. Focus groups and online surveys were conducted with consumers. 22 percent associate sustainability with nature regeneration, 18 percent with environmental protection and 14 percent with some future action. Wealthier consumers see the danger of over-use of the term "sustainability" in public communication (i.e. greenwashing). Quality seals may however serve as a guide. In the absence of a universally valid "sustainability" label the national bio-sign is most often associated with the sustainability topic. More information is available at: http://www.dlg.org/aktuelles_ernaehrung.html?detail/dlg.org/4/1/3814

Dutch public database to highlight sustainability efforts in Dutch food industry

The Dutch food industry and the Ministry of Agriculture launched the Platform Sustainable Food in 2009 in order to speed up sustainability efforts and expand the scope of sustainable products offered to consumers. A dedicated consumer logo was considered, but eventually abandoned as it would not be representative enough to cover all issues involved. In addition, operators noted that not only consumers need to be informed about the progress and key points regarding sustainability, but all partners involved in the supply chain. For this reason a public database, named "Information System Sustainable Food", will be developed in the coming years. The information system will be fed with data by industry and can also be consulted by consumers. At first, a basic version will be developed to pilot certain elements of the system.

Retailers launch Sustainability labels

At least two large EU retailers have revealed new in-store sustainability labelling schemes in 2010, involving an on-pack label highlighting eco-friendly, own-brand products. The idea behind



CGA Directors and Staff celebrated a bumper season in 2010 and wish all citrus growers a successful 2011.

it is to get sustainable products out of their niche existence in order to make them attractive for the vast majority of the consumers. Typically to qualify for "sustainable" label status, products must demonstrate that they contribute to a sustainable use of natural resources in either production or use. Contact CGA to find out more about these schemes.

European Retail Forum: Retailers deliver on their Green promises

According to a new report monitoring the achievements of voluntary targets set by members of the European Retail Forum (European Commission and Retail sector initiative) shoppers in Europe are finding more green products on the shelves. The report shows retailers are delivering on their commitments. As well as putting more sustainable products on supermarket shelves, retailers have also made progress in reducing their environmental footprint, paying particular attention to resource efficiency measures. Communicating with consumers on sustainability issues, however, is considered an area for improvement. The report recommends setting up an award scheme to reward best practice. The report, as well as more information on retailer commitments, is available from: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/industry/retail/index_en.htm.

Belgian NGOs start awareness campaign on water footprint

The Belgian NGOs Ecolife, VELT and WWF have started an awareness campaign supported by the Flemish government on the water footprint of Belgian consumers. Given that 70 percent of the consumer's water footprint can be attributed to food, the main focus is on reducing the water footprint of menus. Consumers can calculate the water footprint of different ingredients of their menu on the dedicated website. The NGOs aim to highlight water intensive foodstuffs and introduce "less thirsty" alternatives. Unsurprisingly fruit, vegetables and potatoes are among the best performers across all food categories. See www.watervoetafdruk.be

Stewardship to deal with water issues

The UK NGO Food Ethics Council regularly organises business forums on particular topics, and recently focussed on water risks. How businesses deal with water risks is fast evolving. As well as independent initiatives by businesses and NGOs, there has been a relatively concerted approach to the issue internationally. Efforts are under way to co-ordinate approaches to water footprinting and, more recently, to measure the impacts of water use, which vary from place to place. Businesses involved in these efforts have now set their sights on 'water stewardship', recognising that some of the biggest challenges arise not in measuring water risks, but in the practicalities of working with your neighbours to manage them.

A business case from Marks & Spencer on Spanish vegetables was also presented. The report of the business forum is available from FEC's website (<http://www.foodethicscouncil.org/system/files/businessforum100713.pdf>).



NEW ZIM DIRECTOR FOR CGA

At the recent Directors Meeting held in Johannesburg, CGA welcomed a new director for Zimbabwe to the Board.

Paul Bristow was born and educated in Harare. After completing his national service he attended Gwebi Agricultural College, obtaining a First Class Diploma in Agriculture with four distinctions.

After college he farmed in Mashonaland where he grew tobacco, coffee and maize.

In 1980 he moved to Beitbridge and joined B K Cawood starting a career in citrus farming. Whilst working with Benjie Cawood he met Benjie's daughter Patty. Paul and Patty are now married and have two children, Tessa and Mark.

The Bristows are now the proud owners of Cawood Mazumga Ranch which is one of the largest remaining citrus farms in Zimbabwe. They run a diverse farming operation albeit under very difficult conditions.

Paul is an avid Sharks fan and also supports the SA Springboks. He enjoys the outdoors and fishing as his hobbies.

Chris Maggs, our previous director representing Zim has stepped down as he lives in the northern part of Zimbabwe where there are no longer any citrus farms. The Board thanks Chris for the years of support and input he gave in spite of the negative circumstances.

Simplicity and consistency for sustainable food labels

Various consumer groups have conducted work in the past about barriers to healthy eating, but as sustainable food choices are rising up the agenda it would be useful to get a better understanding of what consumers make of the issues. Research by Which? indicates that while sustainability issues are not a priority for many consumers at the moment compared to issues such as taste, safety and price, many people think they are important and if presented in a way that is more meaningful on labels, there is a willingness to take them into account. Seven out of ten people said they would pay more attention to the environmental impact of foods they buy if the labels were clearer. Existing labelling schemes were seen to be "generally not well known, poorly understood and on the whole do not help consumers understand how different aspects of sustainability have been addressed". See <http://www.which.co.uk/documents/pdf/making-sustainable-food-choices-easier-231317.pdf>