XLnt Citrus introduces innovative packaging system to South Africa

An innovative packaging system that provides a light-weight, customisable packaging solution using recyclable materials was introduced to South African citrus packers last week. This alternative form of citrus packaging is engineered along standard carton dimensions and palletisation requirements.

The XLnt Citrus company and Colors Fruit (South Africa) packed the first pallet of South African citrus using the Eco Pack System™ of recyclable and reusable plastic trays. The pallet of Class I lemons has been shipped to the UK and will arrive towards the end of July.

The Eco Pack System™ was invented by Mr Yosi Heyman and developed by Eco Pack, Israel. The Eco Pack patented System™ is composed of a plastic frame and two light-weight plastic sleeves which together create an economical, multipurpose, recyclable “box” for packing fresh and frozen produce. About 20 000 Eco Pack trays were used to pack Israeli citrus during the 2010 citrus season.

The Eco Pack System™ introduces several benefits to packers, shippers and receivers, including lower environmental impact through the use of fully recyclable or reusable materials requiring less energy to manufacture than conventional forms of packaging, light-weight and compact design allowing increased transport efficiencies leading to cost and energy savings during sea and road transport, and fully customisable sleeves allowing branding or merchandising to be printed on the outer sleeve which enhances product presentation and modernises the look of packed produce. Technical advantages include improved ventilation allow quicker cooling to get product to the required shipping or storage temperature resulting in lower cooling costs and less energy required for cooling, potentially improved shelf-life and less pressure bruising or squaring of fruit.

According to Dr Graham Barry of XLnt Citrus “the introduction of this innovative form of packaging should go some way in reducing costs associated with exporting citrus and other fresh produce from South Africa”.

Dr Malcolm Dodd of the Post-Harvest Innovation Programme and the University of Stellenbosch believes that the Eco Pack System™ provides potential solutions to many of our cooling and storage problems associated with long-distance shipments of fresh produce.