

Lychees from Madagascar : the 2011-2012 season is well underway



Madagascar is the largest exporter of lychees to Europe with some 20,000 tonnes shipped between December and January. As we approach the festive season and 'Lychee fever' is appearing again, this is the best time to take stock and talk to the major industry players about this season's progress, the challenges they face and, in particular, how they are managing to work together to meet constantly-changing market demands. Favourable weather conditions and a drive by the sector to implement and harmonise good practice point to a successful 2011-2012 season. This, in any event, is the hope of the main players, particularly the Madagascan growers and workers, for whom the lychee provides a major part of their income.

Importer Nicolas Morinière, Managing Director of UNIVÉG Katope France

« Feedback from the last season was useful »

What's new regarding Madagascan lychees, soon to arrive on the European market?

On the production side, the outlook is encouraging; both rain and sun came just at the right time and we should receive top-quality fruit.

On the export supply chain side, feedback received last season has been useful. A series of measures supported by the Madagascan authorities should improve fruit quality and ensure compliance with European regulations, especially on MRLs.

What are your customers' main expectations this year?

The concept of information is important - volumes, harvest dates, arrival dates in Europe, overview of the market and, of course, quality assurance, compliance and traceability.

How does an importer like UNIVÉG prepare for the season?

As an importer, UNIVÉG Katope must pay close attention to the needs of its customers - distributors and wholesalers - and ensure that these needs are understood clearly by exporters. Preparing for the season is therefore important and starts immediately after the end of the previous season. UNIVÉG

Katope has been a major player in this sector for many years; this is in large part, due to our financial and organisational capacity, but also to the fact that we have always taken our responsibilities seriously because this 'industry' provides a living for several tens of thousands of people in the production areas. CTHT (the Tamatave Horticultural Technical Centre) plays a major role in production, and in helping to get the message across from our customers. It also plays a crucial role in supporting the harvesting and processing stages. Through PIP, COLEACP has also done a remarkable piece of work in supporting the development of a Self-Assessment Guide which helps export companies at all stages from harvesting through to shipping of the fruit. Importers are not idle either because they are very aware of their responsibilities vis a vis their customers as well as the regulations.



Christophe Andreas, Technical Director CHTH

« The self-assessment guide is a real plus for the sector »

At what stages of the lychee supply chain does CHTH intervene?

The Tamatave Technical Horticultural Centre has been involved in the lychee sector since 1997 at various stages in the supply chain: At the production stage, by replanting with quality planting material, technical

ducts crop monitoring in the Tamatave production areas, and also carries out studies and research with a view to improving current practices. This year CHTH has worked with COLEACP/PIP in drafting a Sectoral Self-Regulation Guide (GSAC).

Why is the self-assessment guide so positive for the sector?

The self-assessment guide is a real plus for the sector because it enables each company to conduct internal control of its procedures, and detect in good time any potential problems that could put products at risk. Companies can also take the necessary measures to ensure that products unsuitable for sale are not put onto the market.

The guide is a tool that enables company activities to be structured.

For anyone wishing to find out more, the document is available on the GEL and CHTH websites.

support and training of planters. At the company level by supporting compliance with European market requirements (regulatory and commercial), providing training sessions in good practice (notably sulphur applications, hygiene, and traceability) and by helping companies as they prepare for GLOBALGAP certification. At a more general level in the sector, CHTH con-



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Narson Rafidimanana, Chairman of the Lychee Exporters Group (GEL)

« GEL stakeholders have introduced a wide-reaching action plan »

What does the lychee represent for Madagascar?

Many people earn a living from the lychee in Madagascar. On average, there are four hundred workers in every packhouse of the thirty exporters I represent, this means a total workforce of 12,000, not including the collectors and planters. Lychee exports are the highest or second-highest foreign currency earner in the agricultural sector for the country as a whole.

How has this year's season been prepared?

The stakeholders within the group have developed a wide-ranging action

plan; this includes, in particular, the introduction of the Sectoral Self-Assessment Guide, which has been made possible with technical assistance from CHTH and the support of COLEACP-PIP. The framework is developed in the document, which can be viewed on our website. The guide is available at just the right time. It is a guide to good practices which formally engages all operators wishing to export to Europe.

lychee a little, but this is important. The transfer of know-how locally should allow us to improve the quality of production, and good practices. Everybody is a winner, from the grower to the consumer. In my company, I tell my growers that they will be paid slightly more if they follow good hygiene and traceability practices and use environmentally-friendly fertilisers. This galvanises the growers.



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The lychee season is in reality very short and very demanding. Are you also involved in the local market?

I am a distributor in the Madagascan market. There is a difference between what is required for export and what is required for the local market. In this context we need training here also. When growers learn good practices on the one side, for export, they must be motivated to use them also for production intended for the local market. Especially as the crops are often similar – green beans, coriander, ginger, etc. I am getting away from the

