



Introduction

These Fresh Notes highlight aspects dealt with by the Packhouse Action Group (PAG), representing the pome fruit industry, which was established in August 2009 to facilitate packhouse issues in the fields of engineering, packhouse, packaging, post-harvest quality, environmental footprint and transport.

Outputs of the PAG can be viewed at www.hortgro.co.za ... Technical Information.

Container Loading Workshop

The rapid switch to integral reefer containers as shipping mode, has placed severe pressure on the operators in the handling chain to adapt and perform. One of the goals of the PAG is to ensure a high level of efficiency at pack houses/cold stores. For this reason a container loading efficiency survey was conducted. Based on the findings and several discussions, recommendations were made to address shortcomings.

To gain input from a wider group and to share ideas with role-players in each discipline, a workshop on container loading efficiency was held on 4 October 2011 in Stellenbosch. The 92 delegates had the opportunity to get first-hand information from speakers who gave their views and illustrated the challenges they are facing.

The representative of the shipping lines explained the new trends in container technology and its impact on CO₂ emission. Delegates heard the challenges facing the container depot, whilst a major logistics service provider explained the importance of effective planning in scheduling of containers. A transport contractor, actively involved in fruit transportation, underlined the cost of trucks not utilised effectively due to delays and late changes in instructions. PPECB explained their role in the container loading process and the importance of good communication. A proposal for the introduction of a container loading checklist that will ensure the individual parties take accountability for their acts and to assist in reducing containers being rejected at loading points, was well received. Further action in this regard is planned. The Transnet container terminal operator informed the delegates of the plans for extending the terminal to accommodate the envisaged demand for containers in the Port of Cape Town.

The general feeling was that the opportunity to share views and to get to know how the different role-players deal with the challenges of the handling chain, was a successful initiative of the PAG.

CA Manual

The original CA Manual from the regulated era is currently out of print. Piet van Bodegom has, however, been updating the manual and it should be available in electronic format shortly.



Fruit Quality Defect Analysis Database

Hortgro is constructing a database where individual inputs will be consolidated into an industry defect database. The database consists of 3 parts i.e. orchard culls, packhouse defects and export related defects. The purpose will be to establish an industry benchmark, and to use the information to determine research priorities. The database template is available if anyone requires a copy.

Pressure Equipment Regulation

The following feedback was received from Nigel Amschwand of GEA Refrigeration Technologies. He attended a meeting at the Department of Labour in Pretoria. Members present included the Department of Labour (DoL) personnel and the Pressure Equipment Regulations (PER) Review Committee.

It was agreed that at the next meeting of the PER Review Committee, it was going to be suggested that an Annexure be appended to the SANS 347 Pressure Equipment Regulations to specifically cover refrigeration vessels. The annexure will incorporate the pressure vessel regulations in SANS 10147 as well and the inspection procedures necessary to ensure that refrigeration vessels remain safe. Edition 2 of SANS 347 is due to be promulgated any day now, so this new Annex will only appear in Edition 3 next year.

In the meantime, although DoL will not give any notification, it appears that one will not have to pressure test any vessels unless of course there is some doubt on their safety. It is very important that the vessels are subjected to the normal three yearly inspection by an AIA.

Energy Efficiency

The energy analysis and benchmarking exercise was repeated during 2011 at six medium sized packhouses. The purpose is to improve the energy efficiency, carbon footprint and competitiveness of pome fruit pack house and cold storage facilities. The results of the exercise have established two new benchmarking targets: One for CA-storage efficiency and one for the reduction in consumption during peak tariff hours. It was further shown that smaller packing lines tend to be more efficient than the larger packing lines. The focus areas for improvement were identified for each packhouse and a proposed energy efficiency action plan was compiled covering the next two years.

The Packhouse Action Group will repeat this exercise during 2012 with another sample of six packhouses. The valuable results of this project will be used to update the EEpacs-website (www.eepacs.co.za) where all the packhouses and cold stores can access the information to assist in their own energy efficiency programmes. The purpose of website is to define the future energy efficient packhouse and cold store.

