



Update on the QAC situation in the EU

Following the notice in Cutting Edge No. 140 advising producers and exporters of the increased sensitivity of the EU market to the use of QACs, a number of developments have emerged which should be noted:

- Both official (Rapid Alert Notifications) and unofficial (industry information) sources indicate more detections of QACs (DDAC and BAC) on fruit and vegetables imported into Germany and potentially other parts of the EU. At this point there is no official notification on citrus from South Africa.
 - There are at least two laboratories in Germany able to detect QACs at LOD of 0.01 mg/kg. German retailers are requesting a greater number of samples be drawn to check the QAC status. It is possible these additional checks may show an increase in the number of samples with residues above the MRL of 0.01 mg/kg.
 - Already the extent of the QAC use and the residue profile on fresh produce is attracting considerable attention and this is only likely to increase over the next few weeks.
 - The European Commission has been engaged by Freshfel and a number of possible scenarios for dealing with the situation are in discussion. A short-term solution is to invoke Article 18.4 of regulation EC/396/2005 that would enable the temporary setting of residue tolerance for cases where there had been cross-contamination of fruit from biocide use that resulted in residues above 0.01 mg/kg. In order for this process to begin a member state (such as Germany) would need to make the application, conduct a risk-assessment and inform the other member states of their intentions to apply for an interim measure. It is likely that this process will be initiated this week, and will be further discussed at the Standing Committee on Pesticide Residues on the 13-14th July 2012. Such a solution would apply for a short period (e.g. two months) allowing for the market to clear implicated fruit.
- In the longer-term, there is an application to have a positive MRL set for DDAC on citrus fruit in the EU. This proposal has been received by the Commission but official feedback is only expected later in the year.
 - The SHAFTE Technical Workgroup is also evaluating the possible impact of these developments on the Southern Hemisphere supply of fruit into the EU and stand ready to cooperate and respond collectively on this matter.

In summary, considerable “fact finding” initiatives are being undertaken in the EU regarding the extent of use and what the residue levels might be for QACs on fruit and vegetables currently. With improved analytical capacity it is possible more samples will show residues above the MRL of 0.01 mg/kg set for the QAC group. Citrus producers should note this activity in the EU and take appropriate steps to avoid use of QACs that might lead to detections on fruit sent to this market. Producers and packhouse managers are reminded again of the *Recommended Usage Restrictions for Plant Protection Products on Southern African Export Citrus* and recommendations put forward there should be followed.

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