



The first charter shipment of Australian citrus has arrived in the US following the signing of a Free Trade Agreement, which will see customs charges reduced from US\$21 per pallet to around US\$0.30, saving the industry some US\$530,000 a year. With the Californian Navel season drawn to a close, Australian exporters are looking to capture a strong market with exports forecast in excess of 2m cartons this year despite wet weather during June and July which delayed packers by three to four weeks.

MEXICO looks increasingly likely to gain established standards for its organic sector by the end of the year, following the approval of the Organic Products Law of Mexico in April by the Mexican senate. The standards are expected to mirror other official programmes in Mexico's main organic export destinations, including Europe, the US and Japan, which set growing shipping and display standards for organic products. Mexican officials hope the new law will help boost exports, as well as strengthen the national market.

ITALIAN citrus producers organisation Unaproa is promoting a campaign throughout the country in a bid to boost fruit and vegetable consumption. The promotion is expected to run until mid-September and will take place in major retailers such as Auchan and Conad-LeClerc. The idea is to not only boost fresh produce intake but to encourage a varied fruit and vegetable diet including five daily portions of five different colours.

BRAZILIAN apple exports are set to reach just 103,000 tonnes in 2005, a sharp drop from last year's total of 153,000 tonnes. The export shortfall is due to a 23 per cent dip in production this season, according to Moisés de Albuquerque, executive manager of the Brazilian Apple Producers Association.

ARGENTINE lemons could soon gain re-entry onto the US market following a visit by officials from phytosanitary body APHIS to the Tucumán growing region and pack houses. Shipments were suspended in 2001 due to phytosanitary reasons only one year after Argentina gained official access to the market. During the last year of shipments some 19,484 tonnes of lemons, grapefruit and oranges were exported to the US.

The UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has released a survey in which fruit and vegetable consumption is shown to have fallen by 2 per cent. Currently, the average person eats 3.7 portions a day, the report said, compared with the five portions recommended in the campaign which was launched three years ago. Despite the injection of huge sums of money into the campaign, consumers are still being drawn towards junk food, alcohol, soft drinks and processed cheese – sales of which are on the up.

DANISH shipping company J Lauritzen has posted a "very satisfactory result" for the first half of 2005, with profits up 38 per cent to US\$166.1m, compared to US\$120.1m in the same period last year. The company claims it is on target to fulfil its full-year forecasts, which will be slightly lower than in 2004 following an expected fall in profits in the second half of 2005. Turnover increased by 17 per cent to US\$676.4m, up from US\$579.3m last year, while global refrigerated vessels operator LauritzenCool made a US\$20.1m profit through its reefer activities.

Monsoon floods in Mumbai and landslides along INDIA'S west coast have not affected the region's fresh produce industry, according to local producers. Flights, rail and road travel to and from Mumbai were suspended during the deluge, cutting the city off, after a record 940mm of rain fell within 24 hours. Farmers are said to be happy with the generous rains, as it should result in better growing conditions next year. India had already come to the end of its export year when the flooding occurred.

Carrefour has been named the number one foreign retailer in CHINA in terms of sales, according to the Chinese ministry of commerce. The world's second-largest chainstore is now China's fifth-largest retailer after a 31.9 per cent growth in sales during the first six months of the year to some Yn 10.2bn (€1bn), ahead of US retail giant Wal-Mart, which recorded sales of Yn4.7bn (€470m). Carrefour is now looking to accelerate its expansion strategy into western China in a bid to further boost growth. Wal-Mart, meanwhile, plans to establish 42 more outlets in China, bringing its total up to 89.

SOUTH AFRICAN exporter Capespan aiming to export some 30m cartons of citrus by 2007, according to Freek Dreyer, who heads up the team. Mr Dreyer is also forecasting a 15 per cent growth in citrus exports for this year, with promotional activities planned in Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and the Middle East in particular. Cape apples are also doing well this season following the success of this summer's Cool & Crisp campaign. According to recent research the fresh fruit sector is set to grow by 15 per cent over the next five years.

VIETNAMESE fresh produce exports are surging, with overall shipments up 40.6 per cent to US\$138m in the first seven months of this year, while sendings to China have risen by 16.7 per cent in the first five months, according to the ministry of agriculture. Exports to China, in particular, look increasingly likely to grow further as Vietnam works towards enhancing fruit quality in order to compete with product from Thailand and other Southeast Asian countries.

Biosecurity AUSTRALIA has given the go-ahead for sweet orange imports from Italy, including Sicily and Calabria, on condition they are inspected and treated for Mediterranean fruit fly before export. Australian Citrus Growers has also proposed a biosecurity levy to pay for an eradication programme in the event of an outbreak. ACG also claims the imports are not likely to threaten Australia's own blood orange industry.