

World Citrus Organization: "Solid" preparations underway amid plans for broad agenda

Swift preparations are underway at the recently announced World Citrus Organization ahead of an expected official launch at Berlin's Fruit Logistica in February.

News of the organization - of which Spain and South Africa are founding members - came to light last month at Fruit Attraction. It has already received the commitment from many of the world's top citrus production countries and is developing a "roadmap" of six key areas to focus on to benefit the industry globally.

"We are working on the project in a very solid way," Jose Antonio Garcia Fernandez, director of Spanish lemon and grapefruit group Ailimpo, told FreshFruitPortal.com.

So far the Northern Hemisphere countries that have committed to the World Citrus Organization are Spain, Morocco, Italy, Israel, Portugal, Egypt and the U.S. - which will likely have a representative from California and Florida.

From the Southern Hemisphere, there is South Africa, Argentina, Australia, Peru, and Chile.

There are also discussions taking place with other countries including Mexico, Greece, Turkey and Brazil.

"At Fruit Logistica we will have confirmation of the members, and we will have a technical meeting in order to have a global view of the main dynamics of the citrus sector," he said.

For now one of the key areas to work on is the organization's future agenda. Garcia said this would be agreed upon by the World Citrus Organization members over the coming months, and would likely involve six points.



These include having greater information available about future increases in production so that countries can plan accordingly and potentially avoid market challenges. "The more information we have, the better the decisions we can take," he said.

Other points are producing better health-related information for consumers so they fully understand the benefits of citrus consumption, and exchanging information and experiences on marketing promotions.

Partnerships between companies and countries to share knowledge on export markets will also be addressed, along with information on fighting pests and diseases, and also how best to maximize citrus' performance at retail amid increasing competition with other fruits.

Discussions would be related to both the fresh and processed sectors, he said.

Garcia recently traveled to Brussels where the European Commission (EC) launched the new European Citrus Market Observatory - an EU working group aimed at providing market transparency and trends. There, he presented the World Citrus Organization, its role and its objectives to the EC, which gave its support to the new organization.

But he emphasized the World Citrus Organization was a global group, aimed at having a much more worldwide view of the citrus business and fostering collaboration throughout the international industry.

"We are working in a very quick way and very happy to have countries already committed," he said.

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