

WORLD NEWS

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MAURITIUS

There is no formal data collection on litchi production in Mauritius. However, based on the number of trees in backyards (31 000) and orchards (410 arpents) and their age, it is estimated that litchi production varies between 2 000 and 4 000 tons annually, depending on climatic conditions. The export season is between the first week of November and the last week of December.

Problem areas

- An endemic bat species (*Pteropus niger*), classified as endangered by CITES, can cause between 40 and 100% damage to litchi fruit if these are not protected by anti-bird nets.

Therefore trees have to be kept low by systematic pruning to facilitate placement of nets.

- The fruiting season coincides with the drought period prior to the summer rains which come by mid-December to the end of December. Trees or orchards which are rain fed suffer heavy fruit loss and/or poor fruit development followed by fruit cracks.

Research thrusts

- **Evaluation of imported varieties**
Mauritius benefits from premium prices when it arrives on the European market during the last week of October/first

week of November. The variety Yook Ho Pow, introduced from Australia during the early 90s, is showing promising traits in terms of earliness in maturity (early November), fruit size (20 g and above) and the percentage of chicken-tongued seeds (up to 70%). Its only disadvantage is its poor peel colour development when mature. The Yook Ho Pow variety is presently being propagated for further evaluation in the different agro climatic zones of Mauritius. In order to extend the production season to early January, late varieties such as Bengal, Hei Ye, Huai Zhi, Yuan Zhi and Fay Si Shu are being evaluated on the cooler sites of Mauritius.

Table 1. Mauritian litchi export volumes between 2007 and 2012.

Year	2007	2008	2010	2011	2012
Volume of litchi exported (tons)	230	185	225	101	332



- **Control of *Cryptophlebia peltastica***

In the context of 'Mauritius as a sustainable island', non-chemical control of the litchi borer, *Cryptophlebia peltastica*, is under investigation.

- **Improvement of shelf life of fresh litchi**

Trials are ongoing to develop postharvest packages to extend the shelf life of fresh litchi for export. The objective is to gradually phase out the sulphur treatment of litchi. **ST**

Report by Dr. Nirmala Ramburn, Mauritius

REUNION

According to Christophe Rocheland, correspondent of PANA Saint-Denis, Réunion had a record litchi production in 2012/13. It was estimated that the production was 10 000 tons off 500 hectares. Their local consumption is estimated at 4 000 tons. **ST**

Information provided by Dr. Nirmala Ramburn, Mauritius



MADAGASCAR

Univeg banks on village-owned Madagascar litchis

In the global food trade, Madagascar is known for its vanilla, cloves, coffee and shrimp, but litchis are also a big contributor to agricultural revenues. Produce importer Univeg has been involved in shipping the Mauritius variety of the fruit from Madagascar to Europe for many years.

Among the diverse ecosystems and unique flora and fauna, the country's rich and varied agriculture sector includes the vitamin C-rich litchi, which grows on wild trees owned by villages. French colonists first brought the fruit to Madagascar in the 19th century and plantings expanded over the years. Today, litchi production is concentrated around Tamatave, the island's only sea port on the east coast.

With annual production of around 100 000 metric tons (MT), Madagascar is the fifth largest producer of the fruit, after China, which accounts for 95%, and then India, Vietnam and Taiwan. The African country is the top exporter of the fruit to Europe, with an estimated 16 000 MT shipped to the EU-27 zone each year. The Malagasy litchi season runs in a very limited timeframe from mid-November to the end of January, with the Christmas holiday period as the busiest time of year.

The litchi industry indirectly affects around 200 000 people locally with approximately 30 000 producers spread over a 300 km (186 mi) length of land along the east coast. More than 9 000

collectors, transporters and packers work to harvest the fruit – which is pesticide-free and meets all global standardisations – and get it ready for export into Europe.

Fruit and vegetable supplier Univeg is the market leader in Madagascar, having been involved in the fruit's logistics for thirty years. Univeg Katopé France started importing litchis in 1983 and was historically, although the largest, only one out of more than ten importers. This changed in 2010 when a large distributor in Germany found some batches of fruit with sulfur levels that exceeded the maximum residue limits (MRLs) permitted by EU regulations. As a result, a restructure took place and Groupement des Exportateurs de Litchis de Madagascar (GEL) chose Univeg's French arm as the sole importer. **ST**

Source: <http://www.freshfruitportal.com/2014/01/09/univeg-banks-on-village-owned-madagascar-litchis/?country=south Africa>; published 9 January 2014; shortened



CHINA

Foshan to raise EU-bound litchi exports in 2014

While it only represents a fraction of exports to North America, the European Union will likely receive 33% more litchis from Chinese grower-shipper Foshan Fuyi Food Co.

The Guangdong-based company's trade manager, Ivy Chen, told www.freshfruitportal.com her company's presence in Europe began in 2006 with just one container, but in 2013 Foshan sent nine containers to the European Union. "In 2014, we hope to export twelve containers. Few Europeans eat litchis though, so it's a very limited market," Chen said during Fruit Logistica in Berlin. "European people know litchis from Thailand, but few people know litchis from China." However, she said due to her litchis' colour, sizing and taste, they were often able to beat out the Thai competition, yielding higher prices. She said the U.S. and Canada represented the biggest market for the company's fruit, receiving around 100 containers a year; a rate she expected would stay steady. Foshan's litchi season runs from May to July, hiring about 120 people during that period and sending most of the fruit by sea. However, some fruit is exported by airfreight. **ST**

Source: <http://www.freshfruitportal.com/2014/02/20/china-foshan-to-raise-eu-bound-litchi-exports-in-2014/?country=south Africa>; published 20 February, 2014



Photo: Fsfuyi.com