

Title Effect of moisture content on dates disinfestation with methyl bromide
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Abstract

Dates are infested by insects before, during and after harvest. Dates fumigation with methyl bromide upon arrival at the packing houses, controls infestation effectively and also causes a high proportion of larvae and adults to emigrate from the fruit before they die. Because of its contribution to stratospheric ozone layer depletion, this fumigant has been phased out in developed countries in 2005 (Non-Article 5 countries) and it will be phased out in developing countries (A5 countries) by 2015. However, its use in non-Article 5 countries is still permitted under the Critical Use Exemption (CUE) control. Dates, during their development, go from maximum moisture content (85%) at the early kimri and early khalaal stages to less than 30% at tamr stage. Up to now, the Methyl Bromide Technical Options Committee (MBTOC) has not been able to identify feasible alternatives to replace the use of this fumigant in high-moisture dates' disinfestation. The parties to the Montreal Protocol requested the Excom of the Multilateral Fund to consider financing demonstration projects on alternatives for high-moisture dates. MB alternatives to semi-dry or dry varieties should also be developed because their harvest is delayed until ripening on the tree that makes them suitable for nitidulid beetles attacks. A date's variety could be considered as semi dry or as soft (high moisture date) depending on its origin and growing conditions.