

Innovation in horticultural market access

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Abstract

Improving trade access for horticultural products remains a major challenge for many countries and is a constraint on increasing the value of exports. This is despite the recognition of the importance of food trade to global food security, the establishment of international trading rules under the WTO SPS Agreement, and the adoption of 34 International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures to help guide and interpret the application of these trade rules. One reason this remains such a challenge is the broad range of pests and diseases potentially carried by fresh produce and the sometimes unrealistic approaches taken to assessing and managing these risks. In some cases imports of new products are prohibited until risk analyses are complete, a process that often takes several years and may result in import conditions that are not practical to implement or are uneconomic. Responding to these challenges requires persistence and innovation. Businesses and government agencies need to work closely together and ensure that potential trade is realistic. This requires market research on the window/ opportunity, who are the consumers and how will they use the product, pricing, transport routes and freight availability, and analysis of tariffs and potential gains through Free Trade Agreements. Scientific information is also needed, including information on pest distribution, pest associations (including plant parts affected), nature of damage and economic impacts, and in particular any major pests that might prevent trade and viable options for managing these pests pre-export. Again a close link between government agencies, researchers, and industry is needed to ensure that pest risk management measures can be implemented in a cost effective manner and do not constrain export growth. Several examples are presented demonstrating the benefit of grower/exporter organisations, the scientific community, and government agencies working together to develop innovative approaches to market access and managing pests in export crops.