



By Carl Collen

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## Citrus community 'steps up supply efforts'

World Citrus Organisation says that it remains "deeply committed" to meeting global demand for fruit amid Covid-19 outbreak



**T**he World Citrus Organisation (WCO), the international organisation bringing together producer countries, has welcomed the efforts made by the global citrus community to keep the supply of fruit flowing during the coronavirus pandemic, while emphasising the safety measures taken to protect those across the supply chain.

In a statement, the WCO said that the citrus industry had "stepped up its efforts" to ensure the continuous supply of safe, healthy, and high-quality citrus fruit for consumers around the world.

At the same time, the sector had focused on ensuring the protection of workers across the chain, the WCO confirmed, while keeping global citrus production and supply going – crucial given the healthy nature of the fruit, and how Vitamin C contributes to the normal function of the immune system.

"Since its outbreak in China, the unprecedented coronavirus crisis has had a deep impact on the functioning of global markets and supply chains, and the citrus sector is not an exception," the WCO said. "Against this backdrop, and on behalf of the world citrus community, the World Citrus Organisation would like to re-confirm the strong commitment of the sector to continue supplying safe, high quality, healthy citrus fruit all around the world."

The WCO outlined how the coronavirus crisis had created a number of challenges for the citrus market, including a slow-down in operations across the chain due to the strict measures implemented on physical distancing in virtually all countries; trade restrictions resulting from logistical issues such as a shortage of containers and truck availability; a slow-down in cross-border operations; and an increase in costs across the chain.

The citrus sector was working around the

clock to tackle these challenges, the WCO noted, and had taken measures to provide the highest protection to workers across the supply chain.

Measures included telework for non-essential personnel, security distances between essential operating staff, strict hygiene precautions, health checks for workers in the field, and the establishment of protocols to deal with coronavirus cases.

"These precautions will be on continuous review to ensure the highest level of safety for essential workers, and to continue meeting consumer demand for citrus fruit around the globe," the WCO said. "In addition, the sector is working to ensure the highest food safety and hygiene measures.

Emphasising the fact that the European Food Safety Authority and the US Food and Drug Administration had confirmed that there was no evidence that

transmission through food consumption

"WCO warmly welcomes the general

"In these challenging times, WCO and its

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could occur, the organisation nevertheless reminded consumers to continue following the precautionary recommendations issued by the World Health Organization on good hygiene practices during any food handling and preparation, such as washing hands or avoiding potential cross-contamination between cooked and uncooked foods.

recognition by national authorities worldwide on the need to ensure food security and supply, and the recognition of citrus production and trade as an essential activity," the group added. "Global cooperation is essential to restrict the spread of the virus, to keep borders open to citrus trade and to set in place temporary facilitations for customs operations.

members are deeply committed to meeting consumers demand for healthy, high quality citrus fruit."