



KiwiNet Presentation

The Italian Job

Where it began

- My first visit to Italy was in 1997.
- From this point it was clear that Italian growers faced many more climatic, pest and disease issues versus NZ growers.
- We were shocked to hear they had to replant orchards after 20 to 25 years due to root disease.
- This was attributed to old age and irrigation practises, however new tissue cultured plants seemed to handle replanting into old orchards and re-establish well.
- Their nurseries had done much more than NZ, identifying new clones with root systems that could handle heavy clay soils with high PH. Although many growers continued to use whatever plant was cheapest and available.



Joint Venture Salvi & Opac

- In 2001 I was part of a JV with SALVI and OPAC when we developed 80ha of Hort16a as one of the first movers with Zespri's global program to expand Gold kiwifruit.
- This started with shipping of Hort 16a graftwood from NZ for grafting and the practice of moving graftwood carried on for many years. NZ had MPI controls for pest control as required by the EU rules.
- At this point we were even allowed to ship bare rooted 2 year old Bruno grafted to Hort 16a to enable us to replace with urgency a large area of newly planted and grafted vines in our Latina orchard that were hit with a severe frost.
- Due to the vine health issues on older vines the idea of grafting over mature vines was not considered viable. Interestingly they also had a wood disease call "bacteriosa" which could kill vines if not cut back and removed.....



Rootstock and White Peach Scale then Psa!

- The most common rootstock was tissue cultured Hayward versus Bruno as in this era most growers believed that the vine deaths were worst on Bruno plants or cutting grown plants.
- White peach scale has always been visible on Hayward both due to limited products registered for use on Kiwifruit in the EU and less financial incentive to grow class I quality fruit. Italian growers have always had a tonnes first, quality second approach which has gradually created more and more issues for their industry.
- Ultimately none of these problems were at all an issue compared to the arrival of Psa-V and the rapid decline in Hort 16a as it fell victim to this new issue.



Psa and Border Control Measures

- Thinking of the protocols we now have in place since Psa emerged, the relatively large movement of plant material from NZ to Italy was remarkably easy and accepted by the Italians.
- Border control measures in Italy were and still are more relaxed than NZ, with a stronger focus on tax and duties.
- In the 20 plus years I have been there we had new fruit fly incursions impacting many fruit crops, Psa on kiwifruit, Red palm weevil on Italian palm trees, *Xylella fastidiosa* on Southern Italy Olive groves and Moria or Verona Vine Decline in Northern Italian kiwifruit now arriving in Latina plus BMSB starting in the north and spreading south impacting many crops notably stone fruit, apples, pears and kiwifruit. This is not the full list of issues, but these 6 incursions have caused havoc and large financial losses.



Observation and Summary

- There have been similar patterns in the cause, detection, response, and control of biosecurity threats. Often including little or no immediate reporting.
- On top of this you have the EU rules that many Italians struggle to relate with, then you have Italian national rules which are more relevant than provincial rules which seem to have the most impact and in some cases within provinces you have city or town rules from the local council.
- The chance for these layers of rulings to misalign is high. In addition apart from Latina in Lazio, kiwifruit is not such a big deal crop and the best and most respected regional bio-security body is the Emilia Romagna phytosanitary agency in the north around Bologna.
- The apple and viticulture bodies have a reasonable organisation and voice but kiwifruit is quite fragmented and with the last 10 years of production issues the value of large multi nationals doing R&D for chemical solutions is low
- The open borders of the EU are not so open under COVID-19 but still much more so compared to the island nation of NZ – in all probability the Italian growers will keep facing more new events in the years to come....





Non dovrete mai lasciare i figli soli con il papà. Queste foto vi...

Questions