

QUEST Crop report – Week#24
Belgium, June 10th, 2002

Picking was not too heavy last week. This resulted in a smaller supply at the auction and a slightly higher price. The quality remains excellent.

Fruit size was a bit smaller but that what is on the plant promises to be larger. Growers who did not prune as much are now harvesting smaller fruit, in particular the last fruits of the clusters. Fruit load is now at its peak, in part because of pruning to five. When picking increases again, the reduction in fruit load won't be too severe. If we want to grow large size, we will have to prune to 4 starting next week. With such a pruning strategy, we will have the largest fruit load during the periods with the most light.

We have seen much Botrytis during the past weeks. At present it seems to be a little less, but stay alert. Remove the spent stems with U-clips and do not wait till they turn brown/yellow. Brown stems are very susceptible to Botrytis and this will quickly go into the stem. If there is some time left over this week, use this time to remove spent truss stems. An option is to spray the lower part of the stems after deleafing. With warmer weather, the number of leaves should increase. Aim for 15 to 17 mature leaves per plant.

Make sure that the plant can take up plenty of water during warm days, especially in the afternoon. Give short turns, from 100 to 125 mL, so that you can repeat quickly. The EC can be reduced on light during the middle of the day, from 3mS to 2.5mS. The plant can then take up the water better. Do not go lower than 2.5mS to avoid quality problems and make sure that the last turns of the day have an EC of 3mS again.

With regard to nutrition we have to emphasize calcium instead of potassium. Make sure that the calcium concentration is high enough and make the uptake easier. Increase the amount of calcium nitrate (+25 kg per 1000L stock solution) or liquid calcium nitrate (35 to 40 L). The latter is taken up easier and does not contain ammonium nitrate. The chloride level should also be maintained; the experience is that it improves calcium uptake.