

DEALING WITH SUN DAMAGE IN LYCHEES

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SUN damage to lychee trees and lowered fruit yield can be an issue for growers using stressing techniques to induce lychee trees to flower.

Reducing water supply to induce flowering can make trees more prone to sunburn.

On a lychee farm near Mareeba in north Queensland, agricultural consultant Harry Townley is studying the potential of a liquid sunscreen Parasol to reduce sun damage to lychee trees. The study will provide growers further information on spray volumes and application times.

Harry Townley: "In the study area, lychee trees under moisture stress are showing sunburn damage to 80% of the foliage on the northwest side. We are seeing if we can offset the incidence of sun damage with the use of liquid sunscreen.

"The results are encouraging on trees that have been sprayed twice with Parasol. We estimate 40% improvement in leaf condition between treated and untreated trees. There also appeared to be more flowers the full height of the tree, rather than just at the top.

"Now that the trees are setting fruit, a few trees will be sprayed a third time to compare production between treated and untreated trees, and the impact on harvested fruit."

Other trials and demonstrations with Parasol around Australia have been showing reduced sun damage and moisture stress in a wide range of fruit and vegetable crops.

* The loss of mangoes to sun damage has been reduced more than 20% in trees treated with Parasol - a potential return on investment of \$21 to \$32 per tree (based on Brisbane 2007 market stats for Kensington Pride mangoes), or \$3570 to \$5440 per ha (at 170 trees/hectare), plus potential benefits from increased fruit quality and size.

* Trials on Hass avocado trees in the hot Atherton Tableland spring indicate reduced moisture stress in trees coated with a reflective film of the liquid sunscreen.

* Application of Parasol to capsicum crops in central Queensland has helped protect both capsicums and transplanted seedlings from sun damage.

The thin-film sunshield of fine calcium carbonate particles is sprayed directly on the crop to build a protective coating that blocks harmful UV and IR light, while allowing photosynthesis and fruit colouring. Because sun damage cannot be reversed, the aim is to build a good level of coverage before extreme weather, and to maintain that level through the season.

Applied by ground equipment or through aircraft, Parasol is now available for use in Australia to protect a range of agricultural crops including apples, pears, stone fruit, citrus, tree nuts, olives, grapes, avocados, bananas, mangoes, lychees, guavas, pawpaws, pineapples, vegetables – including capsicums, tomatoes, potatoes, onions, cucurbits, and lettuce, seedlings, ornamental and nursery plants, cotton and peanuts.

For more information:

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