Sanitary status of stone fruit industry in the Mediterranean countries: Albania

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ALBANIA

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Fruit-tree cropping, due to favourable climatic conditions and an old tradition of cultivation is important to Albanian agriculture. Fruit production, which equals about 60,000 tons (Anonymous,1996), ranks second among the horticultural crops after grapevine and by passes that of olive and citrus. The European plum (*Prunus domestica* L.) and sweet cherry (*P. avium* L.) represent the most planted species with orchards frequently established on hillsides. Peach and apricot trees (*P. persica* L. and *P. armeniaca* L.) are less numerous and generally confined to the coastal plain. At present almond (*P. amygdalus* L.) and sour cherry (*P. cerasus* L.) are not quite economically important.

Many international cultivars are grown in Albania, but the majority were introduced decades ago and at present lack the quality demanded by the market. Native cultivars, notwithstanding their wide presence and the array of types, are economically important only for plum and sweet cherry.

Initial reports of virus diseases (Prune dwarf and Sharka) in stone fruits in Albania, based only on field symptoms, were published relatively early (Papingji, 1963; 1965). Later, sharka was reported by Kaltani (1978), who carried out field observations and sap transmission tests of plum pox virus to herbaceous hosts.

More complete studies, using laboratory tests, were done recently to determine the incidence and distribution of virus and virus-like diseases among the stone fruit species (Digiaro *et al.*, 1994; Myrta *et al.*, 1994). The mean infection level for all species (43%) was on the whole, acceptable, considering the fact that no sanitary selection has never attempted there and propagated materials circulated without restrictions. In the assays, sweet cherry and plum showed levels of infection of 56 and 47%, respectively. More encouraging were the infection rates of 12, apricot and 16%, almond. Sour cherry was 26%. The viruses detected in these crops were: PPV in plum (31%), ACLSV in sweet cherry (40%), PNRSV in plum (7%), and PDV in sweet cherry (25%). Neither ApMV nor any of the nepoviruses were detected serologically. Mechanical and graft transmissions had not reveal other virus or virus-like disease (Myrta *et al.*, 1996).

Sharka is nowadays very serious in plum, whereas peach and apricot seem less affected. The disease is unevenly distributed in the country with the highest infection in south-eastern areas; reaching 100% in several plum orchards. Sharka-free areas were found in Western and South-western Albania. PPV characterisation by ELISA with serotype-specific MAbs against several Albanian PPV isolates derived from plum, peach and apricot determined that PPV-Marcus and PPV-Dideron serotypes are present and occasionally mixtures of both occurred in the same tree (Myrta *et al.*, 1998).

Numerous plum samples of principally two cultivar collections of stone fruit trees located in very distant areas, were tested by dot-blot hybridisation against hop stunt viroid (HSVd) and tested negative (Pallas *et al.*, 1998). Positive controls were included in the test.

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