



Plant growth regulator tablet - A new tool for cherry growers

Norac Concepts Inc. announces the introduction of **falgro** plant growth regulator. The new product, which contains gibberellic acid, recently received full regulatory approval for use on sweet cherries and sour cherries.

The key benefit of the new product is to ensure improved fruit quality through enhanced fruit firmness and resistance to post harvest disorders of sweet cherries. **falgro** also delays fruit ripening by 4 to 5 days, thus lengthening the picking period and delaying the period of susceptibility to rain cracking. Delayed fruit maturity allows for increased fruit size.

On Montmorency sour cherries, an annual application of **falgro** can increase fruit spur development in yellows virus infected trees. Vegetative shoots growth and subsequently the lateral shoots are stimulated thereby resulting in increased production the following year.

Gibberellic Acid, a naturally occurring plant hormone was developed in Canada in the early '70's for use on sweet and sour cherries and rhubarb roots. Dr. Norman Looney, a Research Scientist at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, did the original development work with gibberellic acid on sweet cherries in BC.

Researchers all agree – the key reason for using gibberellic acid is for post harvest fruit quality improvement. Treated cherries will resist pitting disorders with all the handling of the fruit and will hold up better in the supermarkets. Untreated cherries tend to soften up and form black indentations and that makes them less appealing to consumers.

Fruit quality is such an important consideration with sweet cherries that packing houses require that the crop be treated with gibberellic acid. This issue is now full front; fruit firmness is definitely an important consideration with sweet cherries.

Treated cherries handle better and arrive to destination in better shape. A firm fruit has more resistance to damage in storage, transportation to the market and on the store counter. Better quality fruit in the stores means easier selling. This is especially true for the overseas markets.

Another important consideration for using **falgro** plant growth regulator is delayed fruit ripening. There are several benefits resulting from this feature.

Firstly, Canadian cherries are later maturing due to the more northern climate. The fruit becomes available later in the season and prices tend to be higher. Delayed maturity by an extra 4 to 5 days may help get a higher price for the produce. Delays in maturity means more money in the grower's pocket.

Furthermore, **falgro** is an excellent harvest management tool. The delay in fruit maturity allows for more uniform ripening and lengthens the picking period. **falgro** allows growers to "stretch out the season". By using gibberellic acid, growers can extend the season and allow for better planning of fruit pickers.

In the Okanagan Valley, June is the rainiest month of the year and mature cherries are prone to splitting in rainy weather. **falgro** delays the maturity of certain varieties as much as possible into the drier month of July, thus avoiding cherry ripening in June and reducing the susceptibility to rain cracking.

Another benefit from delayed maturity is fruit size enhancement. Fruit sizing is linear; the longer the fruit is on the tree, the bigger it gets. This is not due to a fertility effect or from a growth promoting effect of the chemical. but from the direct result of the delay in fruit ripening. When maturity is delayed, there is an opportunity for the fruit to size up 10% or more. And the grower will get a premium for his crop.

Packers pay a premium for larger fruit. The larger the fruit, the higher the premium. The Asian market for example, will pay a higher price for 9 or 8 row cherries.

There is big money in growing large quality cherries. Fruit quality and delayed maturity are very important to cherry growers. While the use of gibberellic acid for delayed maturity is an individual grower decision, its use for enhanced of fruit firmness is an industry mandated reason why all growers should plan to apply **falgro**.

falgro plant growth regulator improves post harvest fruit quality - better firmness leads to better handling, storage and shipping. **falgro** will also delay ripening resulting in better harvest management and increased fruit size.

* falgro is a trademark of Fine Agrochemicals Ltd. United Kingdom

