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Certification programme for stone fruits in Cyprus

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The production and release of budded or unbudded stone fruit trees to the growers and the selection of improved cultivars were until recently covered by government farms under the responsibility of the Department of Agriculture. So far little information is available about local cultivars in Cyprus but only a few cultivars continue to be economically valuable. The Department of Agriculture, in order to upgrade the sector of stone fruit production, had made many introductions of budwood material, and mother plantations were created at state farms. Before their release, the various cultivars were evaluated for their performance in different areas of the country. The planting material originated initially from Greece, and later, from California (USA). Recent introductions of plant materials were made from Spain, Italy, France, and England.

In recent years new private nurseries were established, and gradually have taken part in the production of nursery trees. The activities of the private nurseries were not controlled by the Department of Agriculture and the materials used by them were of doubtful sanitary status.

This situation made it necessary to introduce a minimum certification program, covering the main cultivars of deciduous fruit trees and other important crops. The cultivars covered by the scheme are deciduous fruit trees, citrus, strawberries, and carnation. The scheme is compulsory for all nurseries producing these cultivars. The implementation of the scheme started in 1997 and main features are:

- the propagating material must be derived from the mother plantations of the Department of Agriculture or introduced from registered institutions of countries having certification programs. The propagating material must be at least of the category: multiplication stock;

- the mother plantations of the Department of Agriculture and of private nurserymen will be visually examined yearly for the presence of PPV and every two years tested by ELISA for PPV and PNRSV. ACLSV, PDV, ApMV; nepoviruses will be considered in the future;
- seeds for the production of rootstocks shall be derived from certified trees tested for PNRSV and PDV;
- clonal rootstocks have to meet the requirements for propagating materials;
- the nurseries for the production of stone fruit trees must be located in isolated areas no less than thousand meters from non-certified stands. For nurseries, which do not meet this requirement, nursery trees shall be produced under controlled conditions, ensuring full protection from infections (insect-proof greenhouses or screenhouses). The same requirement should be met also for mother plantations;
- certified nursery trees will be given blue certification labels reporting the species and variety of cultivar and the certification stamp issued by the certifying authority.

Nurserymen willing to establish a nursery have to apply first for registration and later be certified.