

Update

March 2021 – Issue 41

Beacon Commodities



What a testing year it has been for all! We hope the worst is past us but unfortunately this dreaded virus will create many more hurdles throughout 2021. Having to deal with Brexit at the same time has added to the 'chaos' as the 'teething' problems which were supposed to last weeks continue.



Due to Covid restrictions, Tommy and Michael's trips to see harvests and suppliers have been non-existent. This is not an ideal situation and something that Zoom or WhatsApp cannot fully replace. We look forward to the return of travel and the excitement of sourcing quality botanicals from around the globe. In the meantime, we have put together a brief update on key issues in the botanical world to think about at this time of year.

BRCGS Certification

Beacon Commodities are still aiming to achieve BRCGS Agents & Brokers certification in April 2021. The lack of travel has tied Tommy to his desk, meaning the Beacon HACCP Plan has been updated and the 'mountain' of paperwork tackled. We continue to be Sedex registered and have completed their latest self-assessment questionnaire.

Brexit

What grey hair Michael had seems to have disappeared and what hair Tommy had is now grey! What a chaotic and busy two months the import/export business has been. At Beacon we have experienced three common problems across all import and export shipments. We thought it might be useful to share these with you.



Cinnamon quills drying in Sri Lanka

Commodity Codes – never has it been so important to check that we are importing products under the correct codes. Botanicals are niche and therefore rarely have their own code. This means it is left to interpretation and we have to ‘hold’ Customs/Port Health’s hands through the process. There is a lack of understanding of what these products are and what the end use will be.

Delays – there are delays with UK Customs but we have found they are less than experienced across northern European Customs (Ireland, Germany, France and Belgium). Also, long gone are the days of picking up the phone and discussing the issue! Emails which sit ‘dormant’ in inboxes are how things are currently handled. It is incredibly frustrating!

Documents – having traded with the rest of the world our understanding and availability of documents has been good. Some documents we have found to be incredibly useful in providing further evidence and detail for clearance.

Pesticide Testing

As part of our commitment to the improved food safety we have been running an extensive pesticide testing matrix across our botanical range. This is not a cheap exercise but an important one nevertheless. The risks however remain low if botanicals are used solely for distillation but it is still important that levels are monitored and MRL’s respected. We can expect changes in this area with the UK’s move away from EU Regulations/Guidelines.



Pest Control

Fingers-crossed spring will appear soon! Tommy has spent much of the later part of 2020 and early 2021 looking at very large and muddy puddles in the Suffolk countryside!

Each season can bring its own challenges in regards to pest control. Sites handling food products have a legal responsibility to ensure that they have protection against contamination from pests (this includes flying and crawling insects, rodents and birds).

Anyway, with the change in seasons the risks of infestation can change and we’d encourage you to monitor any premises storing or processing botanicals including warehouses. It is always a good idea to prevent issues and perhaps look at discussing early warning devices such as pheromone traps with your pest control contractor or internal pest control inspectors.



Sedex

We know that some of you are members of Sedex and those that aren't we'd encourage you to consider it. Sedex is an organisation that provides a platform for companies to manage and improve working conditions and sustainable business practices in global supply chains. Beacon are members of Sedex and would encourage any other businesses who are members to consider registering.

Juniper Crop

We are sure the difficulties (again) of sourcing quality Juniper Berries have not been lost on you all. We are working on another dreadful yield (2019 and 2020) with the added issues of high demand, Covid, freight delays and price increases. As mentioned, we have been unable to travel to see collectors and regions but we are still working furiously to secure the quantities we need.

There is no doubt everything is later this year. Usually, we would have secured our quantities and have everything under 'lock and key' by now. That is not the case with a large number of trucks still to make their way to our Warehouse in Essex. In another bad year – it is also vital to be aware of a drop in quality.



Not the most positive review but we are all hoping for light at the end of the tunnel!

Best wishes from both Tommy and Michael and stay safe.

We are fully aware that by the time you have read the above, circumstances will/may have changed! Please feel free to contact either Tommy or Michael direct to discuss in greater detail.

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Angelica root fresh out of the ground



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