

Banacol celebrates 30 years with growth

The second Colombian banana group also confirmed production growth in Costa Rica, with the start-up of a new 740 ha pineapple plantation. In addition, they are also operating with a new packaging facility, in compliance with international food safety protocols. The

total pineapple supply projection for 2011 is up to 13.5 million crates, compared with 11.5 million in 2009. 70% of this comes from the group's own production. 2011 is also their 30th anniversary year, consolidating a strong two-figure growth in banana exports between 25% and 30%. "Our strong growth is also the fruit of our strong social and environmental company policy" declared managing director María Teresa Velásquez. In fact, all of their Colombian and Costa Rican plantations have the Rain Forest Alliance certificate. "We also have areas of totally preserved native forests among our properties" added María Teresa. Among the latest new features from Banacol is the introduction of dwarf pineapples "Banacol Gold" and "Venecia Gold".

Agrupapulpi, traditions and innovations

Agrupapulpi combines tradition and experience with innovation applied to the production of its product lines. The company currently works on adding such quality certificates as Nature's Choice, Field to Fork, and QS to the existing AENOR, GlobalGAP, Calidad Certificada, and BRC. Among its main products are lettuce varieties Iceberg, « Little gem » or « baby » that are cultivated and commercialized all the year round.



Kiwifruit variety revolution on the Adour

The two leading French kiwifruit groups, Sikig and Prim'Land, are diversifying their cultivars

The Aquitaine region enjoys favourable soil and climate conditions for kiwifruit growing and is currently going through a stage of confirming the acclimatization of this fruit. The increasingly strong concentration of the crop in this region of south-west France, particularly along the River Adour, is essentially based on the expansion of new varieties.

New cultivars from Zespri under development at Sikig

Sikig is one of the leading French kiwifruit companies, specializing in top-of-the-range fruit. It is also the no.1 French firm for organic kiwifruit and sells 70% of its produce abroad. With the Hayward variety guaranteeing the company slightly over 10,000 tonnes, Sikig has launched a diversification revolution, particularly with the Hort 16A golden kiwifruit.

"We have planted around a hundred hectares of Hort 16A. This variety is licensed by Zespri (New Zealand) for a planting quota that we are sharing between Sikig and Blue Whale. We are also testing three new Zespri cultivars before planting them. Two are yellow-fleshed and the other has green flesh, to complement the Hort 16A and Hayward markets", explained Julien Pédelucq. These three new cultivars are Gold 3, Gold 9 and Green 14. Gold 3 is a yellow-fleshed variety. Its flowers open three weeks after Hort 16A but it is harvested 3 weeks earlier and produces fruit that are 30% larger. The other yellow-fleshed cultivar, Gold 9, is a long-life variety that completes the Zespri range. It is harvested at the end of October like Hort 16A, gives similar yields and can be stored for long periods.



The green-fleshed Green 14 is an early-cropping variety that produces large-sized fruits like those of Hayward. It is also as productive as Hayward but ripens 3 weeks earlier, for harvesting around the beginning of October. Green 14 has a different taste to Hayward, and being a sweeter fruit with a different flavour is positioned in a different product segment.

Meanwhile, alliances to conquer markets are being forged in the South West of France, as is the case of Sikig, Blue Whale and Barniol. This is a huge phenomenon and it is noticeable that the groups have pulled out all the stops to achieve higher prices for green kiwifruit (Hayward) and develop new varieties, as shown by the Label Rouge quality mark and the Adour kiwifruit PGI. The PGI will be launched officially in Berlin.

New Actinidia arguta varieties for Prim'Land

The Scaap Kiwifruits de France group has been growing kiwifruit for over 30 years in its orchards on the Adour. A founder of the Union Adour kiwi France, which counts Coop Landadour kiwi, VDL and Sofruileg among its members, Scaap Kiwifruits de France has three packhouses at Labatut, Amou and Souprosse and a sales office, Prim'Land. Since the Oscar brand was created, there has been no stopping the export of South West French kiwifruit to markets the

world over, on every continent where kiwifruit are eaten. Oscar were the first French kiwifruit to be exported to India and China in 2006, and partnerships with Chilean growers have made it possible to strengthen their presence in the shops all the year round.

While the green-fleshed Hayward is still the basic variety, the group has started down the path of innovation by expanding into new varieties. After the Italian-bred Summerkiwi, which it began planting in 2003, and the yellow-fleshed Jintao, which will come into full production this year, the first commercial orchards of new Actinidia arguta varieties have already been scheduled, particularly of two varieties that the firm has selected from its recent trials: Hortgem Tahi and Hortgem Rua.

"SummerKiwi complements Hayward, while the golden fruit are aimed at consumers who do not like green kiwifruit. Arguta is a new product, and though it is a kiwifruit it should be classed in the small fruit category. It is a product on the same level as blueberries or raspberries and will be sold in punnets, particularly to position it in the HoReCa sector. Consumer tests have been good. You don't need a spoon or a knife to eat an arguta. But a new organization will need to be set up and get the marketing going", explained François Lafitte.

That should not be a problem for an organization that has been cultivating innovation and success for the past 30 years.

Summerkiwi, with new destinations in Russia

The Russian market will be the new destination for Italian kiwi from the company Summerkiwi. "Russia seems interesting to us because customers there demand high quality" explained director Giampaolo del Pane. Traditionally, their main markets have been Germany and Italy, with TN shipped to the latter destination last season. However, prices last season were very low due to a supply glut. This season, a volume restriction of 20% is anticipated in all Italian kiwi varieties due to weather problems caused by a cold front in the north and different kinds of problems. Summerkiwi are currently researching the generation of new red and golden kiwi varieties. "As well as exporting, we work in greenhouses and this is where our origins as a company lie. This is why we are always interested achieving the highest quality results" explains Giampaolo del Pane.



JinGold, brand synonymous with quality

This season, the key for JinGold kiwis will be valuing quality over quantity. Although Italian kiwi production anticipates an important downward trend due to a particularly cold climate and seed problems, this will not be an important obstacle for JinGold. At the Macfrut Fair, Naturitalia's marketing director Augusto Renella emphasised the excellent reception of the JinGold yellow kiwi variety by Italian consumers, since it is acknowledged as having a more balanced and higher quality than other kiwis on the market in terms of sweetness. This is why the same response is expected from the rest of the European consumers.

JinGold was developed in 2001 to be the Premium brand for both green and golden kiwi. The growing annual production expected for the northern hemisphere this season is 6,000,000 TN. Although growth is slower in the South hemisphere, a 15% rate of annual increase in production compared with the previous year is also foreseen. Despite the current market situation, the JinGold directors' prognoses clearly lean towards improvement. In an estimated period of 5 to 7 years, they expect to reach a production of 30,000 TN in the northern hemisphere and a similar amount off-season in the southern hemisphere.

Golden kiwi, Zespri development driver

The search for new golden kiwi varieties is taking up all the efforts of New Zealand producers. Weather factors such as rain will be relevant in determining the development of the sector this season, revealed Blair Hamill at Macfrut, reaffirming the stance of avoiding accelerated production growth in order to focus the efforts on bringing about significant changes in quality and extending the supply range. The Zespri group is New Zealand's largest kiwi producer. In 2010, 350,000 TN were exported to their main markets in Europe (49%), Japan (17%) and the rest of Asia (22%). While confirming at the Macfrut Fair that the group would keep up similar export volumes, Blair Hamill also announced that important investments are being made in planting new early harvest varieties (G3), long-life golden kiwi (G9) and sweet green kiwi (G4). "Our mission will be to triple the current turnover with an important strategy of increasing the new varieties" added Hamill.

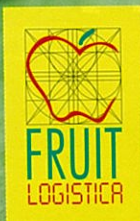
Oscar is thirty years' old and the family is growing

They came from Australia, New Zealand, China and Spain to the birthday party in the Landes. Thirty years calls for a party. It was an outstanding day to celebrate the birth in 1980 of Oscar kiwifruit. François Lafitte, chairman of Scaap Kiwifruit France and Prim'Land, wanted to thank their main international clients, who came from New Zealand, Spain, Australia and Taiwan, by inviting them to celebrate Oscar kiwifruit's thirtieth birthday at the port of Lanne, in the Landes (France), on 22 October. It was the perfect occasion to show the guests the fruit on the tree a few hours before the start of the 2010 harvest, which looks promising despite the lack of water this summer, and to bring them up to date on the additions to the range. Since the Oscar brand was created in 1980, the essential Hayward variety (13,000 tonnes grown on 520 ha) has made a little bit of room for new varieties (see the "Kiwifruit variety revolution" article in this issue): Summerkiwi for earliness, Kiwigold for the Asian market, red kiwifruit for their novelty value and the latest baby (literally), hardy kiwifruit (Actinidia arguta), which the French call kiwai. The first harvest of this snack kiwifruit has just ended with a total of 10,000 punnets. As François Lafitte explained: "We have harvested the equivalent of 10,000 125g punnets. This is a small kiwifruit, also known as a baby kiwi, which is more like berries than kiwifruit in terms of in-store display". Tastings of the new variety have won over the clients, so much so that the Barcelona-based company Prats Fruits is saying that this product "will be a big hit in Spain".



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