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RZ Seeds & Services

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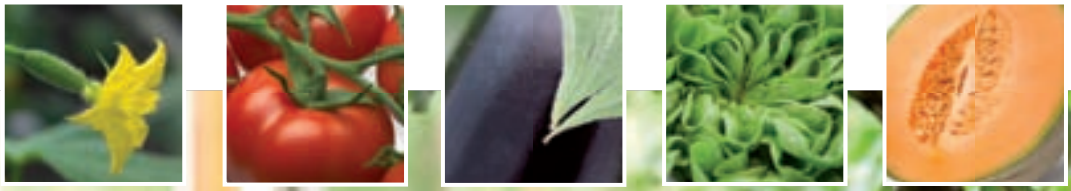

RIJK ZWAAN

Professionalised the market for gherkins together
Structural search for opportunities for aubergines
New melon turns out to be sales success in winter

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'Professionalised the market

Food manufacturing company Develey has a wide range, in which a major role is reserved for gherkins. Annually, the company grows and processes 20,000 tons, predominantly for the domestic German market. The company uses Rijk Zwaan varieties for 90% of its gherkin production.

The collaboration between Develey and Rijk Zwaan started about 20 years ago, Michael Durach, general manager, recounts. "At that time we were already a strong player in the industry market. Besides gherkins we were also active in sauerkraut and various other products such as mustard, sauces and salad dressings. Even back then, our strength was our focus on quality and strong, regional brands. Through our collaboration with Rijk Zwaan we wanted to make further use of these strong points: by means of the right varieties, specifically suited to our growing areas, and by intensifying chain collaboration."

Reliable year-round

Thanks to that close collaboration with Rijk Zwaan, the average calibre of the varieties has increased quite considerably in recent years, Durach relates. "The important thing here is that we look at the cultivation characteristics as well as processability. Whereas growers need, above all, a healthy crop and a high yield, in the factory it is in particular a matter of internal and external quality. The constantly-improved, parthenocarpic varieties of Rijk Zwaan (see box) make it possible to meet both these wishes. This leads to a stable, good quality year-round, wherever in the world the

Seeds & Services

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RIJK ZWAAN

for gherkins together'

product is bought. We ultimately serve the consumer with this and, together, we have professionalised the market."

So, although the calibre of the varieties has reached a high level already, Rijk Zwaan and Develey together continue looking for further improvement. "We also listen carefully to what our various buyers are telling us," Durach explains, "and so we sell our product in jars, in different formats and flavours, but we also supply McDonalds with gherkin slices for their hamburgers. Each sales channel has its own demands as regards, for instance, fruit size, flavour and structure. By constantly playing into this I am convinced that there is still growth left in the market, for all sorts of target groups, young and old. Take, for instance, the 'Wies'ngurken', specially developed for the famous 'Oktoberfest'. They are going like a rocket!"

▲ Gerald Krischke (left) and Michael Durach.

About Develey

Develey is a food manufacturing company with a long tradition. Since it was established in 1845, Michael Durach is now the fourth generation at the helm of the company, together with his brother, Stefan. Although the starting points are still the same, i.e. quality and the focus on regional markets, the company has expanded considerably. More than 1,000 employees are behind an annual turnover of € 250million, and apart from its 6 factories in Germany, the company has locations in France, Poland, the Czech Republic and Italy to name but a few.

New-type varieties

There is a rapid shift taking place in gherkins at the moment to parthenocarpic, or seedless, varieties. These varieties are characterised by, among other things, a more uniformly-harvestable product, much-improved fruit quality and a smaller core. For growers, too, these new varieties have huge advantages. For one thing, they do not need bumblebees for pollination and their production level is, on average, higher than that of the traditional varieties. It's no wonder, then, that Rijk Zwaan puts all its energy in the seedless varieties in its gherkin breeding programme.

Salanova® helps Chiquita break through in China

Ever since Chiquita started a joint venture with the Chinese Haitong Food Group, the trading company has been fully active in the Chinese market. One of its first campaigns was the introduction of Salanova®. Following earlier, positive experiences in other parts of the world, China's turn has now come.

Traditionally, lettuce is seldom eaten in China as a fresh salad. Iceberg lettuce and cos lettuce are widely used, though, in 'hot-pots' or stir-fries. These products are grown and processed throughout China and distributed all over the country, to retail companies but also to food service channels. Especially iceberg lettuce is big, having approx. 80% of the lettuce market. "So with Salanova we are able to distinguish ourselves," Dennis Foo, manager of Chiquita China, says. "The product has a unique flavour and structure, and the freshness we can offer is unparalleled. As a new player in the Chinese retail market, this is the perfect product to give us a foothold."

Serving all channels

Salanova is not a new product for Chiquita. "In North America we have been working with this type for years and reactions there are very positive," Dennis says. "Consumer research proves, therefore, time and time again that the convenience of Salanova is appreciated enormously. In the Chinese market this convenience product is now also going to play a leading part. End 2009 we started selling the product as a wrapped lettuce, fresh from the field. We don't just sell to hypermarkets but also to specialist retailers, food-service companies and wholesalers. That's why we regard Salanova as a means to reach our goal: a leading position in the top segment of the lettuce market; in whole-head, but in the future also in various forms of pre-packed product and as an ingredient in complete, fresh meals. Ultimately, we want to serve all channels!"

Marketing support

In order to realise its ambitions, Chiquita is investing a lot of effort in marketing, one of the company's strong points for many years. "Starting point is that we must be able to continue distinguishing ourselves. In the first place by means of good varieties, high quality standards and a reliable production chain, but also via communications. We are thinking here of, for instance, introducing brands, attractive packaging and organising events. It is important to teach consumers that Salanova can be eaten as a fresh salad. We do this, for example, by organising cookery workshops and in-store promotions." Rijk Zwaan can play an important part in this, Dennis concludes. "Besides developing new varieties, we also see this company as an important link in exchanging information. Thanks to Rijk Zwaan we can learn from the experiences of others."

‘Finally found the solution with Salanova’

Vegetable processing and production company Refricon from Brazil is always looking for innovation: to differentiate itself in the market, but also as a service to its major customer, McDonalds. Salanova scored a bullseye in that respect.

Refricon had been looking for a better basic ingredient for mixed salads for years, to be used, among other things, for the popular McSalad of McDonalds. Apart from the right product characteristics, at least the same stringent demands were made of growing and processing it. That called for a serious approach to the search which included an orientating visit to the Salinas Valley in the USA. “We visited several growing areas there,” Luis Katayama relates. “It turned out that traditional varieties were grown there, but that the leaves were picked when they were still very young, the so-called ‘baby leaves’. We came to the conclusion that this method was not workable for us. The huge amounts of seed required and the high altitude, combined with the necessity for mechanical harvesting, are too big a problem in Brazil.”

Easy to process

The turnaround came a few years later, when Katayama came into contact with Rijk Zwaan on the Hortitec trade fair. That is when Refricon got to know Salanova and a whole new world opened up for the company. “With Salanova we are killing two birds with one stone. Not only do we now have varieties that are very suitable for our growing areas, the harvested product is also much easier to process. Due to the large number of small leaves per head we can work much more efficiently. What’s more, we harvest the product when it is mature and that means it has developed its full flavour. For our buyers that is, of course, a very big plus point. And finally, there is so much scope for us with the wide Salanova range. After all, each buyer has his own specific wishes and we are now able to meet those wishes.”
Expectations for the near future are, therefore, high, Katayama concludes.

“McDonalds Brazil has already made it known that it wants to have doubled its number of restaurants by the year 2015. We think we might even be able to more than double our sales. We know by now how important mutual collaboration is in this, with Rijk Zwaan but also with other Salanova partners. That collaboration and the introduction of new varieties will surely ensure that our buyers remain enthusiastic about Salanova.”

Shared passion for flavourful organic tomatoes

For many years now, tomato production company Wight Salads and supermarket chain Waitrose have formed a strong team. What binds them is, among other things, a great passion for organic products. It's not surprising, therefore, that both can still see a lot of prospects for the segment, which includes flavourful tomatoes.

▲ Kieran Devine (left) and David Northcroft.

Whereas the total market share of supermarket chain Waitrose is 4.2%, the share within the organic-tomatoes range is no less than 26.3%. According to Fresh Produce Development Manager David Northcroft, this huge share is easily explained: "We only choose the very tastiest tomatoes. We do this year-round and run dedicated promotional activities alongside. That way the slightly higher price, as a result of the higher production costs, is not a problem for consumers."

Modern growing locations

These very tastiest tomatoes are grown, among others, by Wight Salads, who have production locations in the UK (27 ha) and Portugal (13 ha) at their disposal. Nearly 40% of the total area (13 ha) is dedicated to organic production, says New Product Development Manager Kieran Devine. "In Portugal one of our production areas is a state-of-the-art glasshouse nursery of 7.2 ha, especially built in 2008 for organic production. Here we grow all types of tomatoes, including many Rijk Zwaan varieties. From loose cherry tomatoes (Cheramy RZ), to medium truss tomatoes (Roterno RZ) and classic round tomatoes (Dometica RZ). Because we are convinced that organic tomatoes should be able to be of at least the same quality as conventional ones, as long as the right varieties are chosen, we test all potential new organic varieties for an extra year in our dedicated organic trial house."

Waitrose also put a lot of energy into innovation. Northcroft: "Together with our suppliers we conduct, for instance, consumer research – something you should never allow to slip. We also follow the various variety trials and we visit open days of breeding companies like Rijk Zwaan. All aspects are looked at: shelf life, presentation and crop characteristics, but flavour will always be the most important one. If a variety does not show a significant improvement over the current standard, it will not progress."

Growth through innovation

Wight Salads, as well as Waitrose, are convinced that there is still sufficient growth in the organics market. "There is a solid core of consumers who will always go for organic produce and once the economy improves that group is bound to expand," Devine says. "Further growth is found especially in innovation. With new varieties we must try and grow a product that is at least as good as or better than conventionally grown tomatoes, always complying with the organic guidelines and never tiring of telling the story!"

▲ Grower Johan Groenewegen.

Structural search for opportunities for aubergines

For the past six months, Desmond Jas, on behalf of Coforta Verkoop BV, has been selling aubergines produced by growers' association Purple Pride. Having come from a totally different sector, he approaches everything with fresh eyes. "The time for assumptions is over."

Although Jas worked in ICT for 20 years, he was familiar with the fruit and vegetables sector as an outsider. "What always struck me was that growers had so little say in how their product was sold – that is unimaginable, really. Now that the Purple Pride collaboration has chosen a different sales structure (see box), they have a better idea of who their customers are. That enables me, as a salesman, to give better feedback and that knowledge can subsequently be used to make the most of opportunities."

Characteristic for the situation of 2010 is, according to Jas, the large number of assumptions on which big decisions are often based. "Take a look at the types of packaging, for instance. For a very long time it was assumed that retailers would always go for the cheapest solution. We had a visit from a group of retail companies recently, who became very enthused about a box containing one layer of aubergines. They didn't even know that type of box existed. Unknown, unloved – and that also goes for specialities. At the moment, 90% of energy goes to 'ordinary' aubergines, whereas novelties like striped and white aubergines are the ones that need more attention. The same goes for the organics range, for instance, which definitely has a lot more growth in it yet."

Planned approach

In order to actually utilise the chances that are there, a new colleague has recently joined Desmond. "I myself will now start concentrating more on the medium term, something there was no time for previously. It is my ambition to chart the total landscape in which aubergines are moving, and all parties who have influence in some way. Relationships are so important! Not only with trading partners, but also with universities and research establishments, for instance. It's time to tackle things in a planned way. Closer collaboration with breeders like Rijk Zwaan also fit into this picture. I am very interested to see the demo, for instance (see box), and we will be organising a shelf life test before long. There are so many chances to make yourself stand out from the crowd – as long as you put enough energy into it!"

▲ Desmond Jas from Coforta Sales.

Aubergines on display

One of the tools the Purple Pride collaboration wants to make more use of is the demo glasshouse in Zevenbergen. Starting last year, the Rijk Zwaan varieties, including various specialities, are being extensively tested here on 4,000 m². Grower Johan Groenewegen has this to say: "We monitor all the crop characteristics here, such as vigour, fruit set and lateral growth, but we also look at traits that are important to the trade. These include fruit weight and appearance, but undoubtedly also shelf life. We keep track of everything, so that a visit is worthwhile for all the links in the chain. For growers, but also for trade organisations, retail and other buyers.

Different sales structure

Last year, growers' association Purple Pride voted for a so-called 'T-sales relationship', whereby the growers sell their products via new sales co-operative Coforta Verkoop BV, a part of co-operative Coforta U.A., of which the growers are members.

‘Plant breeding without laboratory research unthinkable nowadays’

As one of the three directors of Rijk Zwaan, Kees Reinink is ultimately responsible for research and development. Laboratory research is playing an ever more important role in this. “In the meantime it has become an integral part of the plant breeding process.”

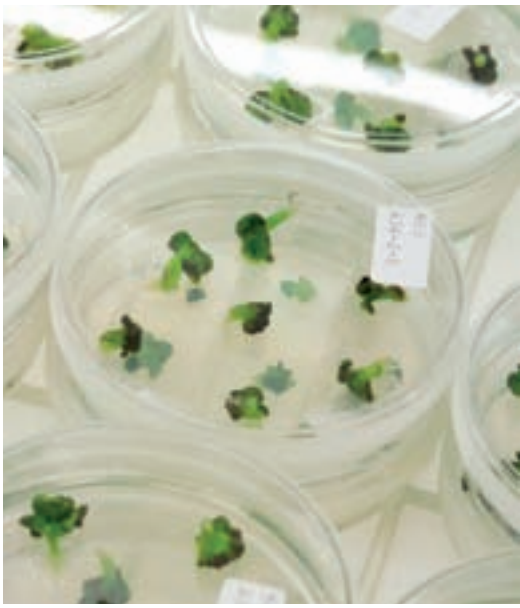
▲ Kees Reinink.

“At the moment we carry 850 commercial varieties and introduce 150 new ones every year,” the director relates. “That means that a variety has an average lifespan of 5 – 6 years. If we were to stop research now, we might as well ‘shut up shop’ in 5 years’ time.” For the time being, though, expectations are that the breeding process will only accelerate even more, not in the last place because of the emergence of laboratory techniques. “Besides research into disease resistance and seed technology, we also invest increasingly in biotechnology. This enables us to speed up, and often also improve, the development of new varieties. And in some cases it also offers new insights, which enable us to create varieties which otherwise would never see the light of day.”

Flavour and shelf life Examples of practical applications abound, according to Reinink. “We are working, for instance, on a good balance between flavour and shelf life – a constant challenge in plant breeding. You could see it as a kind of scales: a variety with a superlative flavour will not usually have the longest shelf life. And that is not always absolutely necessary; for many markets a slightly shorter shelf life combined with a great flavour might well be more suitable. But in plant breeding we do want to get a better grip on that good flavour. Take tomatoes, for example, where 200 – 300 substances influence flavour and each other and, often, can also be converted into each other. By understanding the underlying processes you, as a breeder, can aim more directly for a tomato that tastes good. Instead of coming across something quite by accident, we are moving towards ‘breeding by design’. But even with that extra knowledge, developing a variety still remains a huge challenge, for that super-tasty tomato still has to meet all the ‘normal’ demands as well, of course, like a high yield for growers and that shelf life mentioned earlier.”

New challenges

Rijk Zwaan annually invests a sizeable part of its turnover in R&D. Those investments are not just made in hi-tech equipment, however. Rijk Zwaan also takes on specialist personnel and has entered into various collaborations in the area of research, with information institutes as well as with fellow-breeding companies. Finally, an entirely new discipline is beginning to evolve: ‘bio-information science’. Reinink: “Recently it has become viable to chart the DNA of all crops in its entirety. This enables us to find out even faster which trait is stored in which part of the DNA. When charting all the DNA of a crop, with a sequencing machine, enormous amounts of information are produced. Putting this in order and drawing conclusions from it demands a vast calculation and storage capacity. An entirely new discipline for which we even take on special people. In short, there are still plenty of new challenges waiting for us in the years ahead.”



Analysing Rijk Zwaan tomatoes

The average consumer will not give it a second thought, but as many as 4 – 5 different types of laboratory research are sometimes needed in the development of a new tomato.

Minimal residue levels

Rijk Zwaan has at its disposal an ultra-modern research centre for **phytopathology**. Here, intensive research is carried out into natural resistance to pests and diseases. Varieties with this resistance will not have to be sprayed quite so often by the grower.

Long shelf life

Knowledge as to which genes in the DNA of a plant influence shelf life is growing all the time. In the **molecular biology** department it is possible, therefore, by means of DNA testing ('markers'), to ascertain very quickly and effectively whether a variety has a good shelf life.

Healthy and lovely and red

One of the phytonutrients that make a tomato such a healthy fruit is lycopene. It is also what gives tomatoes their lovely red colour. The **biochemistry** department has at its disposal hi-tech equipment for measuring this substance and so help the breeders make the right crossings.

Excellent flavour

The **biochemistry** department also deals with flavour research, so important for Rijk Zwaan. Apart from the sugar percentage, also known as the Brix value, the levels of other sweet and sour substances which, combined, give a typical, unique flavour, are also measured.

Good producibility

As with any fruit or vegetable, a tomato also starts as a small seed. The **seed technology** department examines the quality of that seed. After all, it is only when germination and vigour are good that a variety can be produced in large quantities.

Successful with Rijk Zwaan tomatoes

Tim Robinson
Village Farms – United States of America

'Repeat purchases thanks to flavour and presentation'

American company Village Farms has started testing Rijk Zwaan tomato varieties recently to its total satisfaction. According to Vice President Production Tim Robinson, Rijk Zwaan has its priorities right when it comes to tomato breeding. "Besides the flavour, presentation is also very good. That is what's needed in order to stimulate repeat purchases. Also extremely important is shelf life because of the vast transporting distances in the US. Our own tests show that a number of new Rijk Zwaan varieties score very well on this point, too."

'Customers recognise our choice for quality'

Roelf Schreuder
Gourmet - New Zealand

NZ Gourmet nursery sells its products in New Zealand and a number of other countries in the Pacific. According to Production Director Roelf Schreuder, Levanzo RZ meets his wishes perfectly. "One of the main segments here is large truss tomatoes. Within this segment we are looking specifically for quality and shelf life, and that is exactly what we get from Levanzo. Our customers also realise that we, at Gourmet, consciously opt for quality. Ideally we would like to be the only ones growing this reliable variety – that would really enable us to stand out all the time!"

Jesús Iglesias
Rijk Zwaan Iberíca - Spain

'Unique product guarantees good price'

Speciality Montenegro RZ proves that there is still room in the diversified tomato market. This green tomato with its red fruit flesh is grown by, among others, Bonnysa, the largest grower and exporter of tomatoes in Spain. Jesús Iglesias works alongside this company as Rijk Zwaan crop advisor. "At the moment, Bonnysa is supplying supermarket chain Mercadona with the first large volumes of the variety, so that more and more consumers will become familiar with the product. At a crop-technical level anyway, it is a valuable addition. The variety gives quality, taste and shelf life and a guaranteed good price into the bargain."

‘Stable flavour makes for a reliable brand’

Theo Peeters
Landgard - Germany

Theo Peeters is fieldsman at Landgard, the German auction. Because the Landgard name is also printed on its packaging, it is hugely important to always supply a quality product. “That is possible with flavour variety Lyterno RZ. It is a way for consumers to learn to trust the brand and growers can get a higher price for it. That is an ideal situation. However, we are always looking for improvement and we do this by, among other things, visiting the demo glasshouse in Steenbergen at least three times a year. Here, we can look specifically for traits that are important to us, like Brix value, truss structure and green parts.”

John Hoppenbrouwers
Albert Heijn – the Netherlands

‘Consumers come especially for our tomatoes’

Several years ago, Dutch supermarket chain Albert Heijn consciously chose Roterno RZ with its excellent flavour. Product Buying Specialist John Hoppenbrouwers: “The emergence of truss tomatoes already gave a different experience to tomatoes a number of years ago, but the emotion of the green parts alone was not enough for us. Our ambition is to really stand out with the flavour. We want consumers to consciously make the choice to shop at Albert Heijn for our tasty tomatoes. It is ambitious, but we were able to realise that ambition with Roterno RZ, as consumer research shows. Our next challenge is to be able to offer that consistent quality during the import season as well. At the moment we, together with RZ, are looking hard for the possibilities.”

‘Range keeps on developing’

Harry Augustijn
Demo nursery – the Netherlands

Harry Augustijn has been responsible for the tomato demos of Rijk Zwaan in Steenbergen (NL) for the past 7 years now. A time span in which the range has expanded enormously. “Even now, innovation is still enormous. At the moment we have, for instance, mini cocktail tomato 72-146 RZ and loose, small plum tomato 72-150 RZ with a tremendously high Brix value. These are really valuable additions to the range. But traditional types, too, keep on developing. In recent years we have, for instance, seen a trend towards more generative varieties which allow growers to make savings in energy and labour. The challenge, though, especially in the large segment, is to retain a good flavour in these varieties. Because that will always remain a pre-condition for Rijk Zwaan tomato varieties!”

‘New varieties can increase the market for Piel de Sapo’

The Piel de Sapo melon type is enormously popular in Spain, but outside this country it is virtually unknown. A new variety concept by Rijk Zwaan that plays into the specific wishes of the N European market should change this situation. Growers’ association Explotaciones Agricolas Samper, for one, is totally behind it.

Although melons are a popular product in N Europe as well, consumption there is on a totally different level to that in Spain. Not only is the product eaten less often, the preference is also for a smaller fruit size. The latter was always a problem for the Piel de Sapo type, as there were never any specific varieties available for this type. That was also what Jose Luis Samper, president of Explotaciones Agricolas Samper, had to contend with. “The only small melons we could supply were the ones from the second setting. However, those melons are not sweet enough and, therefore, do not meet our high quality demands.”

Playing better into demand

Rijk Zwaan already started to tackle this problem several years ago and Ricura RZ is now the result of this, as the first variety in the new melon concept ‘Mellissimo’, a range of small, tasty Piel de Sapo melons. Samper was one of the first to gain experience with Ricura last year. “From the very first setting this variety gives fruits of 1.2 – 2 kg. Because that is the natural size for this variety, the quality is much better,” Samper relates. Now that there is good source material the time has come, therefore, to increase the market. The opportunities are certainly there, he thinks. “We are now much better able to play into the demand in important countries like France, Germany and the UK. I am convinced that this will enable us to increase total consumption of Piel de Sapo.”

Increasing that consumption does present an additional challenge, though. With its green skin, Piel de Sapo looks quite striking. Despite the fact that the fruit tastes lovely and sweet, consumers do have to get used to its appearance. “Consumers who are not familiar with the type do not immediately associate its exterior with sweetness,” Samper says. “So that, for us, is the challenge. We really must try and find a way to convince people. That can be done by means of marketing efforts, but most of all by offering consistent quality. The latter is exactly what our customers appreciate in Ricura.”

Further improvement

This is also why Rijk Zwaan with Mellissimo launches a special brand, that leads to recognition and a reliable image. Although Ricura already effectively plays into the wishes of growers and retail companies, further improvement within this concept is certainly possible. Samper: “The combination of traits is already giving Ricura a unique position in the market, but a higher production per hectare, for instance, would make the variety even more interesting!

New melon turns out to be sales success in winter

As was the case in large parts of Europe, the Netherlands also had a cold winter. Not exactly a good starting point for flourishing melon sales, you would think. Supermarket chain Deen proved the opposite, however, thanks to the successful introduction of a new variety.

The success story started in the summer of 2009, when importer Hispa Fruit, Rijk Zwaan and Agustin Penon of Exporpack in Costa Rica visited Deen. Augustino RZ was brought to the attention: a new variety of the Charentais type, a type still relatively unknown for winter. Rob van der Weele, as the fruit and vegetable category manager, was immediately interested. "We are always open to new products anyway because we want to be able to surprise our consumers. This melon was a good example of that. With its good flavour and shelf life it was a valuable addition to our range, so we included it in our winter range without any further ado."

Introduction plan

Van der Weele relates how thoroughly the introduction of Augustino RZ at Deen's was tackled. "The quality and flavour had to be reliable, of course; that was a pre-condition. Once we were convinced of that, we liaised with Rijk Zwaan and the nurseries in order to have as much information as possible for our fruit and vegetable managers. All our shops received, for instance, a trial box to familiarise personnel with the flavour and other characteristics of the product. Finally, we also gave the product a lot of attention at the point-of-sale by, for instance, looking for the most effective product presentation together with our partners."

All the effort put into the introduction of the product certainly paid off, the category manager continues. "In what is traditionally a difficult sales period for melons, between February and April, campaigns helped in enabling us to sell large volumes. It is proof, if proof were needed, that even in a cold winter consumers like to eat melons." That is why Van der Weele is convinced that there is a lot more potential yet in the segment. "Because soft-fruit supplies in winter are very low, there are still plenty of growth possibilities for flavour melons."

▲ Paul Groot (left) and Rob van der Weele.

Better alternative

In choosing Charentais, Deen decided to totally take Galia out of the winter range. According to Van der Weele this did not create any problems. "In spite of the fact that Galia has been the most traditional melon type in the Netherlands for years, never throughout the whole winter did we hear even one customer say that they had missed it. That's only logical, really, as we had a much better alternative with the Charentais melons!"

DEEN Deen takes Fruit & Vegetables seriously

Deen is a Dutch supermarket chain with 61 outlets, concentrated mainly in the NW of the country. Another number of stores will be added before long. Fruit & Vegetables play an important part in the chain. Each store, for instance, has a qualified Fruit & Vegetables manager. Several times a year, special meetings are organised when all Fruit & Vegetables managers exchange information.

Chain managers on the road

The Rijk Zwaan chain managers are active all over the world. Their most important task is to attune the wishes from the marketplace to the breeding possibilities as best they can. They also play an important part in introducing new products. In these pages, some of them talk about their own, successful projects.

Jan Doldersum, Asia:
Inspiring the Malaysian fresh sector

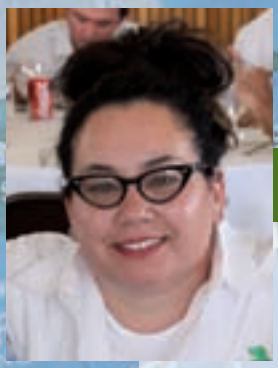
"In the SE Asian region, Malaysia, together with Singapore, sets the tone in fruit and vegetables. It is no wonder, then, that this country is always open to innovative ideas and collaboration with Rijk Zwaan. After having contributed successfully previously to the fresh-cut segment, there are again great possibilities for us here. And that is why I gave a presentation at the Fresh Produce Malaysia trade fair, held in Kuala Lumpur from 15 – 17 May. It was an ideal opportunity to show once again what part Rijk Zwaan can play in innovation and, with it, provide a distinguishable position for retailers. I have presented cases, for instance, about diversification in tomatoes and the introduction of the 'Sensational Flavours' product line. These are success stories in other countries which can certainly also be repeated in Malaysia. Not surprisingly, there was a lot of interest from retailers when the presentation had finished, not in the last place for the Caribbean melon concept. So before very long we will be launching it at the Asia Fruit Logistica in Hong Kong."

Paride Zamagna, Italy:
Building a network for year-round kohlrabi supplies

"Although it is an unfamiliar product in many countries, in Germany kohlrabi is a very popular vegetable. In the summer the product can be grown in Germany, but the cold German winter climate makes that impossible in winter. Consumption, however, is just as high then so that we have started a search for a solution with the international chain team. When it came to it, the solution was two-fold: first and foremost, of course, developing new, specific varieties for cultivation in S Europe, but – no less important – building an international network of chain players. It is my job to bring together Italian growers and exporters and German importers and retailers. Through that collaboration, and a constant focus on quality, we have built up huge kohlrabi exports from Italy to Germany within a relatively short period of time. One important player is, for instance, production company Coop Stern which cuts 12 million kohlrabi every year. They grow them for 95% in plastic tunnels and 5% outdoors and have now started to use our varieties for a great part of their cropping programme."

Romain Harrault, France:
Increasing winter consumption of tomatoes in France

"Here in France, as in most countries, tomato consumption in winter reaches a relatively low level. Together with Rijk Zwaan we are trying to do something about this. The aim is to offer French retailers a better product for the shop shelves, which should stimulate consumption. In order to achieve this, we collaborate intensely with, among others, Disma, exporters with their own production facilities in Morocco. We are currently involved with them in testing varieties Delyca RZ and Ramyle RZ, specifically developed for the Moroccan winter climate. Besides a better shape and longer shelf life, these varieties also offer a stable Brix value, one of the trickiest things to achieve year-round. Not surprisingly, on a visit with a Rijk Zwaan chain team to Perpignan, the heart of French imports, Disma showed a lot of interest. Not just in our new, loose tomatoes but also in cherry tomato 74-114 RZ. So this contact is definitely going to be followed up."



Karen Marie Feliz, US:
Jointly testing new Caribbean material

"Rijk Zwaan has been extremely successful in recent years with Caribbean, a melon concept that distinguishes itself with its outstanding presentation and excellent flavour. In the United States, too, this innovation is stimulating melon consumption. At the same time, however, the concept is still undergoing continued development! So far, the focus was still very much on the winter product, but especially with a marketing concept it is vital to be able to offer the same product characteristics year-round. That is why we invested a lot of effort lately in the first Caribbean summer varieties. As with the new winter varieties, these are at present being extensively tested. We test for crop traits, of course, but we also involve retailers in the new material. What is striking about our approach is the fact that we involve our partners in the variety trials at an early stage. American consumers love our Caribbean melons, so we must try and keep that love affair with our melons going. One way of ensuring this is by having open days, which we are organising in California in August, when our varieties will be on display to a wide public."

News

Rijk Zwaan again at Asia Fruit Logistica

As in previous years, Rijk Zwaan has its own stand again at the Asia Fruit Logistica trade fair, to be held 8 – 10 September in the Convention and Exhibition Centre in Hong Kong. Special attention will be given this year to various convenience concepts, including snack products, and the Caribbean melon concept goes Asia. At the fourth edition of this strongly-growing trade fair a very high calibre of international visitor is again expected.

Demo calendar 2010

Weeks 6 - 44	Tomatoes	Steenbergen, the Netherlands
April - October	Cucumbers and tomatoes (substrate)	Nantes, France
18 August	Lettuce	Kyiv region, Ukraine
Week 33	Demo days kapia, outdoors	Felgyö, Hungary
Week 33	Carrots, beetroot, brassicas	Samara region, Russia
26/27 August	Peppers and aubergines	Dnipropetrovsk/Kherson region, Ukraine
1 September	Organics day	Welver, Germany
2/3 September	Open days tomatoes	Steenbergen, the Netherlands
Week 35	Tomatoes	Kowalew, Poland
9 September	Brassicas, carrots, beetroot, peppers, aubergines	Dnipropetrovsk region, Ukraine
11/12 September	Open days tomatoes	Goluchow, Poland
Weeks 37/38	Outdoor vegetables	Welver, Germany
23 September	Brassicas, carrots, beetroot	Donetsk region, Ukraine
Week 38	Lettuce	Gatton, Australia
Weeks 38 - 43	Outdoor vegetables	Fijnaart, the Netherlands
28 Sept. - 1 Oct.	Brassicas Opperdoes	Opperdoes, the Netherlands
Week 39	Lettuce, brassicas, tomatoes, peppers	Felgyö, Hungary
Week 39	Lettuce	Murcia, Spain
October	Lettuce	Pisa, Italy
October	Outdoor vegetables	Qingdao, China
5/6 October	Outdoor vegetables (organic)	UK
November	Demo brassicas	Ventura (Tuscany), Italy
Week 47	Lettuce	Murcia, Spain
Week 49	Lettuce and spinach	Daylesford, Australia
10 Nov. - 11 April	Peppers, aubergines, tomatoes, tomatoes (organic)	Almería, Spain
10 Nov. - 11 Febr.	Cucumbers, cucumbers (organic)	Almería, Spain
Week 2 2011	Lettuce	Murcia, Spain

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