

## NORTH AMERICA

### New brand of strawberries in North America

New America has recently launched new brand of strawberries with their Mexican partner from Michoacán, Don Limón named VITA MÁS. According to officials their supplying capacity is steady and reliable. The produce is checked, certified and packed at origin to secure international quality standards. Another inspection is done by Don Limón after arrival in the United States and before loading, to make sure only the freshest fruits are distributed.

The strawberry season started in November and lasts until February. However they will be able to supply fresh strawberries until March. The company can offer one Pound and two Pound clamshell boxes with or without stem's. The main varieties will be Festival, Albion and Camino Real.

"Our partner is one of the most important producers of frozen and non-frozen strawberries in Mexico. They have many years of experience on international markets with strawberries, exporting fruit to places like the U.S., Canada, Europe, Asia and Latin America," said Andreas Schindler of Don Limón. The areas of production are Zamora, Maravatío and Huriamba in the state of Michoacán.

## SPAIN

### Red apricots will replace the traditional ones in Europe

Vicente Benavent, a young Valencian who grew up in Morocco and studied in universities in America and Madrid, decided to undertake a unique project in Valencia with the production and sale of profitable alternatives to the traditional citrus crops.

"We are now focusing on apricots, kakis (the Japanese persimmon), walnuts and a line of exotic fruits consisting of guavas and papayas. We have gone from being fourth generation growers to selling our products ourselves, starting from scratch, after many calls and visits to fairs," he adds.



Almost two years ago, they planted 100 hectares of apricots, 30% of which are fully red varieties and will bear their first fruits in May, although it won't be until next year when they'll have an important production and expect to harvest around one million kilos."

These are varieties with large calibres and an intense colour. Their precociousness will allow Vicente Benavent to start the campaign earlier than France and Italy, which are the most important apricot suppliers. "I think that, in a few years, the fully red apricots will replace the traditional ones in the main European markets," he stated.

They have recently recovered a 20-hectare plantation of Ser and Chandler walnut trees, already planted in Valencia. They have been surprised by the high price obtained in the domestic market. Walnut production in Valencia is unique,

as it seems that no one is willing to work on this crop, which adapts perfectly to the region's climate, with a harvest that starts earlier than those of Lleida, France and California. Sales have been very good between September and October." Vicente Benavent has invested in machinery for the handling of walnuts and has registered a brand for the Spanish market: Abuelo Moreno Nueces Ibéricas, which is used in 5 and 10 kilo bags. According to him "We are planning to expand our walnut production in the coming years."

In addition to having a production of around 400,000 kilos of kakis, Vicente has also chosen to develop a new line of exotic fruits. "We have a greenhouse in which we produce guava (the fruit with the most antioxidants in the world) and another devoted to papayas, with a double layer to keep more heat inside. "However, the most interesting papaya



project is yet to come." We are preparing some fields to plant papayas in Valencia, in an area where underground hot springs flow. If we manage to make use of these 30-degree waters at the farms, we could recreate a tropical climate with a not very high investment. For the time being, some of the markets for these products include France, Germany, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United Arab Emirates."

### MEXICO

#### Diesel shortage hits avocado exports

Michoacan could lose more than 2,100 million pesos per week in avocado exports if the shortage in the supply of diesel continues. There would be a high unemployment for cutters, and the price of berries (strawberries, wild blackberries, and blackberries) and avocado would increase, according to businessmen in the area of Uruapan and Zamora.

Despite this, so far, the Minister of Economic Development of the State, Antonio Soto Sanchez, and local authorities have not intervened to avoid worst case scenarios. According to the businessmen, Soto Sanchez is disregarding the protocol for these kind of issues, the market and its supplies. All the machinery for spraying, harvesting, and transporting avocados and berries works with diesel;



so do the more than 400 trucks that move the fruits from Uruapan, Zamora, and Los Reyes abroad and to different regional markets in the country.

Thus, if there's no more diesel, berry production would decrease by 33.3 % and avocado production by 50 % . This would mean that producers would lose fruit and that it would become cheaper abroad, representing about 100 million dollars in losses, i.e. something like 2,100 million pesos every week.

Meanwhile, gasoline entrepreneurs have stated that Pemex has promised to supply them by Tuesday, but nobody has said if the shortage would continue. It is worth noting that there has been a shortage of diesel since July, but that it has

intensified since September, a period in which gas stations have been receiving very little fuel. In addition to the huge losses for the avocado, berry, and lime sectors, the shortage would also affect many vegetable producers and small businesses that cater to the most remote communities, which could also lead to a food crisis.

### PHILIPPINES

#### \$10 million fund proposed to help mango industry

A new \$10 million fund has been proposed by Deputy Speaker and AAMBIS-OWA party-list Rep, Sharon Garin, to help the production and development of the mango industry in the Philippines. Mango is the Philippines third largest fruit export next to the Cavendish banana and the Pineapple.

Mangoes are sometimes regarded as the country's national fruit and the Phillipines is one of the best sources for mangoes in the world, according to some. Garin hopes to take this even further with the fund by using it for propagation, production, research and development, post-harvest handling and processing, marketing and the promotion of Philippine mangoes.

"It is vital that we develop and promote a globally competitive mango industry, to increase production and generate higher income for mango farmers, growers, traders and other stakeholders", Garin said.



### GERMANY

#### Naturland: Mislabeled Organic Carrots

Following the incident where organic carrots from various EU countries were re-labelled as organic carrots from Germany, the market cooperative Naturland-Bauer eG commissioned further independent tests, the results of which are now available.

After the first steps towards complete clarification of the allegations, the audit conducted by the Raiffeisen Association Westfalenlippe, Münster, confirmed the preliminary information, which had already been reported. Subsequently, the Raiffeisen Association examined the supply of 410 metric tonnes of carrots delivered from the companies Bio Frische Service GmbH and Nur Bio GmbH to Naturland between August and December 2015.

They found that the faulty declaration of origin must have taken place prior to delivery to Naturland. Naturland deals with 16,000 metric tonnes of carrots annually, which means that 2.5 % of the total volume was affected once.

The eco-inspection body IMO, Institute for Market Ecology GmbH, has confirmed this result in its own spot checks. It is explicitly stated in the provisional test report that the situation was not that a conventional product became organic, but that organic carrots of Dutch and Danish origin were made to be German organic carrots. This happened,



despite the fact that there is in principle a sufficient incoming-goods inspection in place at Naturland.

The Supervisory Board and Management Board of Naturland had already ordered an immediate review of the incoming-goods inspection before the results of the audit came through, with the aim of tightening up the system in such a way that it is better protected from mistaken and abusive use.

### PERU

#### Organic banana crops affected by lack of rainfall

Peru is starting to take a share of the international market with its organic bananas, just when the demand for this product is reaching one of its highest peaks. The rising demand for organic foods by younger consumers is a growing trend and it is a strategic moment for the

development of crops that respond to this need.

Vicente Chanta, of Río Chira said "The climatic conditions that we have in Piura and surrounding areas make it possible for producers like us to grow organic bananas in a sustainable way for many years. At no time of the year does it become necessary to use chemicals, unlike what happens with bananas from other destinations, which makes us very competitive in this market"

Peru has availability of bananas all year round, but the campaign with the biggest volumes kicks off in January and lasts until June. "Right now, we have a big problem because of the lack of rainfall, and the reservoirs are almost empty. It is a situation that we see every year at this time, but its impact is currently more severe and it is taking a significant toll on the crops," reported Chanta.

### POLAND

#### Organic market has great potential to grow

The potential for the development of the organic food market in Poland is large, although the Polish market is still doing poorly compared to Western Europe. "The organic food market has growth prospects. It is a chance for smaller producers to find a niche and survive. I do not expect it to become a mass market, but it will still have a significant impact," stated Stefan Grzyb, of PKO Bank Polski.



In Germany, Denmark, Austria and Switzerland, the share of organic products in total food retailing stands at 4 to 8 %, while in Poland this share does not exceed 1 percent; however, the market is growing rapidly and now its value is estimated at over 700 million zloty (162.23 million Euro) per year. Since Poland became a member of the EU, the number of organic producers has grown from 4,000 in 2004 to over 30,000 today. Organic production is an opportunity for many producers with smaller and medium-sized resources," assured Stefan Grzyb.

In his opinion, the observed trend should continue; however, the market development will be conditioned by the purchasing power of consumers.

### **JAPAN**

#### **Japan could become major banana producer**

Japan has found a way to grow bananas in cold climates in a fraction of the time. Tropical fruits like bananas are usually not produced in colder climates like Japan. The country itself imports about 99% of its high banana consumption. This may change soon as researchers are hoping this new method of growing could grow Japan into a world class banana exporter.

The agriculture company behind this new method is D&T Farms. Their current experimental facility can produce bananas, which would usually take two years to grow, in four months. The method is called the "Freeze-thaw awak-



ening method" and involves imitating the earth's climate from 20,000 years ago by freezing saplings to minus 60 degrees and planting them once thawed.

Tanaka, the founder, said he experienced many setbacks over forty years developing the process and even spent \$4.3 million out of his own pocket to fund it. Now with all his work finally coming into fruition, he hopes it can make a huge impact on agriculture in Japan.

### **COLUMBIA**

#### **Improvement of agricultural sustainability with microalgae**

The University of Almeria (UAL) is at the helm of the SABANA project, which seeks to obtain new biofertilizers and biopesticides as an alternative to the chemicals currently used in agriculture. The focus is on microalgae, which could help improve both the sustainability and profitability of agriculture.

This has been reported by the UAL in a note after a working meeting held last week, which counted with the participation of 50 researchers from Germany, Hungary, Belgium, Czech Republic and Spain, and which has been organized in the framework of an initiative that will last for four years and aims to set up a globally prestigious research centre for the development of microalgae biotechnology.

According to the UAL, the SABANA project will make it possible to obtain fruits and vegetables, as well as safer aquaculture for the consumer and the environment. The director of the microalgae marine biotechnology research group, Emilio Molina, explained that the demonstration plant featuring the technologies developed will have the capacity to produce up to 300 tonnes of microalgae and by-products per year, which will be evaluated for introduction into different markets.

The project also includes the creation of a research and development centre, which will give courses at different levels, as well as of an on-line service to provide access to all information generated during the project.

The UAL is coordinating this project, which has a budget of 10.6 million Euro, and which has the support of companies, like the Cajamar Foundation, and various institutions, such as the Institute for Agricultural, Fisheries and Food Production Research and Training (IFAPA), the Council of Economy and the Council of Environment and Land Planning of the Regional Government of Andalusia, as well as the Subdelegation of the Government and the City of Almeria. ♦

