

### AUSTRALIA

#### New export opportunity for Western Australian brussel sprouts grower

Western Australian produce company, Odeum Farms is a WA based company who has more than 30 different varieties of fruit and vegetables for both the domestic and international markets, from citrus to melons, strawberries and even pumpkins. It grows and supplies 90 % of Australia's brussel sprouts during the spring and summer months. Odeum Farms is preparing to export brussel sprouts to Japan and South Korea for the first time this spring and summer.

Odeum Farms, National Category and Farms Manager says it will be the first time Australia has supplied to these Asian markets in this seasonal window. The company already exports to Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, Hong Kong, Malaysia and the Middle East and says it is constantly looking for new opportunities.

Odeum Farms are anticipating another strong season of both quality and supply with exceptional growing conditions experienced over the past several months which are well suited for this line of produce. Mr Marais has also noticed a growing popularity in recent times.

"Being a member of the Japan export committee of Australia, a newly formed committee through government bodies



and affiliates to expand Australia's vegetable export footprint," Jason Marais said. "Odeum Farms are very pleased to be testing those markets."

"The dreaded brussel sprout which was once forced upon us as children has in recent years become ever more popular in restaurant cuisine and home cooking and is making its mark again with Australian consumers," Mr Marais said. "We have seen demand for our brussel sprouts increase at a minimum of 30 % year on year for the last 4 years and have increased our crop plantings accordingly," he said.

This season Odeum expect to produce 1500 tonnes of brussel sprouts between August to December.

### CHINA

#### Popularity of organic cucumbers grows enormously

According to Mr. Qiu Xianxiong from Hubei Xing Fu Agricultural Development Co.Ltd, "The term organic vegetables mean that the production process of these vegetables follows the guidelines for organic production. There is no use of chemicals, or genetic organisms and products. Furthermore, the vegetables are grown following the rules of nature and ecology theory. To raise the people's quality of life, and because of promotion of knowledge on healthy food, the consumer more and more thinks about eating organic vegetables,"

Compared to normal cucumbers, organic cucumbers not only have a reasonable size, are straight, have a glow, and have a developed rhizome, but the taste is also fresh and crisp. Moreover, organic cucumbers have a longer shelf life than products that are grown with chemicals. This year's production season of organic cucumbers started in May. It will end in November. The price is approximately twice as high as for normal cucumbers. At the moment, the market price for organic cucumbers is the same as last year. The total sales volume has grown. This is mostly because organic cucumbers have gotten more popular over the years.



Mr. Qiu Xianxiong further said, "In Ezhou in Hubei we have our own greenhouses for organic cucumbers. We held around 6 mu for testing. Later we built a production site of 55 mu. In the future, we want to grow to 300-500 mu. Our products include Beijing and Taiwan cucumbers. At the moment, we sell our organic cucumbers under the registered brand "Xing Fu". They are sold directly through companies, both online and offline, to Wuhan and surrounding cities. We have now set up sales through WeChat and through regional e-commerce platforms as well. In the future, we hope that we will have the opportunity to work together with more e-commerce platforms."

### GERMANY

#### **Two Million Kilograms of Tomatoes to be harvested in 2017**

In Germany on the vegetable island on Lake Constance, the fruits are growing on an area the size of no less than seven soccer fields. Overall, two million kilograms of tomatoes will be harvested again, this year. "With 21 different varieties, it is the most diverse vegetable we are producing," says manager Johannes Bliestle.

Carefully picked by hand and sorted, the vitamin bombs are marketed via the wholesale market Reichenau-Gemüse eG.

Since the sales territory of the vegetable association is only covering the south of Germany, there are short transportation routes with all the benefits for consumers and environment. Retailers are selling the extensive tomato range from Reichenau in different, practical packaging.

The diverse range of Reichenau's horticulturists is supplemented by a large variety of organic tomatoes from the Bioland-farm in Aach. In total, 6,000 pallets, which amounts to around 200 truckloads, of tomatoes are leaving the vegetable island on Lake Constance.

### ITALY

#### **Italian blue grapes arriving on an empty market"**

The Italian grape season started for Zoutewellein June. Bertus Schipper an importer says, "Volumes are still limited. Blue grapes will arrive on a completely empty market. There are still some overseas white seeded grapes of lesser quality on the market". The importer currently offers Black Magic and Victoria grapes.



"The grape market is quite good, especially for seeded varieties, which are selling for 10-11 euro (4.5 kg), while the Italian are sold for 3 to 4 euro per kilogram. That is a matter of quality," the importer says. "We are now at the start of the season, and grapes are sent daily, so prices will decrease gradually."

Zoutewelle mainly focuses on exports with the grape sales. "In the Netherlands, you see grape sales are mostly focused on the sales of seedless grapes to retail. Because they also serve specialist wholesalers and ethnic markets, seeded grapes remain an important item for our export customers. However, Italian growers are working on developing varieties. This is stimulated by subsidies. That is remarkable compared to growers in Spain and Greece, who focus much more on existing varieties."

"Our Italian supplier expects to send 10 to 15 % fewer seedless grapes and a comparable volume to last year. For that matter, Spain will definitely compensate for this decrease of seedless grapes. I expect import volumes to reach a similar level to last year. We had a relatively good price level on average then, so we're hoping for a repeat," Bertus continues.

Although part of the Italian cultivation was ravaged by snow earlier this season, Zoutewelle's suppliers weren't affected by it. "We hope to continue with the Italian grapes until December. Last year, we had them until Christmas, and we're trying to reach that again, because the grapes sell for good prices during the start and the end of the season."



### INDONESIA

#### Fresh Indonesian pineapples enter Italian market for first time

Italian consumers can now consume Indonesian fresh pineapples after a container holding 18 tons of the commodity arrived in Italy's city port of Venezia over the weekend. The 18 tons of fresh pineapples were exported in a maiden shipment by PT Great Giant Food in cooperation with Italian importer SAMA SpA.

SAMA is planning to import up to 20 containers of the commodity until the end of the year, Counselor Charles F. Hutapea of the Indonesian Embassy in Rome, told ANTARA in Jakarta in a recent interview. Previously, the Italian consumers could only enjoy Indonesian pineapples in the form of canned product.

The unloading of the maiden export of fresh pineapple was witnessed by Indonesian Ambassador to Italy Esti Andayani together with general manager of SAMA, Giorgio Masiero. Ambassador Andayani expressed happiness over the fact that Italian consumers are increasingly fond of Indonesian fresh pineapples which could compete with fruit from other countries.

### RUSSIA

#### Turkish export to Russia starting

According to Turkish media based on data from the Turkish customs, the first Turkish strawberries and grapes have been exported to Russia. Russia supposedly imported 322 tonnes of strawberries and three tonnes of grapes. This means the sanctions have been officially lifted.

Tomatoes are still being boycotted, although it's assumed the boycott will be lifted between November and April. Russia wants to protect the investments that have been made in the cultivation of tomatoes, which is why the boycott is still in effect officially.

Sudan is also picking up exports to Russia. The African country wants to



export fruit and vegetables to Russia for the first time ever, according to the ambassador in Moscow. In recent years, trade between the two countries improved considerably. Last year, trade was 150 % higher than in 2015.

The EU extended the sanctions against the Crimea by one year. The sanctions against the annexed peninsula will now be in effect until 23 June 2018. The EU will soon also have to decide about extending the sanctions against Russia. It is expected these sanctions will once again be extended by six months. The Russian economy appears to have adjusted to the new situation.

### SPAIN

#### Manchegan mushrooms grown with thermal energy

The Albacete-based cooperative, which has been in operation for more than 10 years, carried out an expansion of its facilities and its need for thermal energy for heat increased. It is not surpris-



ing, considering they sell between 4 and 5 million kilos of mushrooms a year. That is why they decided to set up a solar collector.

It is called the Heliotube, it is of Austrian origin and it uses the sun to generate thermal energy. Taking into account its heat needs, the cooperative decided to bet on this infrastructure, which will allow it to reduce the consumption of other fuels, such as diesel and biomass, for water heating

It is the first infrastructure of its kind in both Spain and Europe and has been the result of the commitment of the local company, MercaJúcar, to reduce the CO2 emissions generated by mushroom cultivation.

The Heliotube is a large cylinder; in this case, 200 metres long and 10 metres high, which concentrates the energy of solar radiation inside a chamber housed along its length, through which a fluid carrying the heat circulates. According to Antonio Sáez, manager of Villarrus, the Albacete-based engineering company that has served as liaison between the manufacturers and the cooperative, "the rays of the sun bounce and concentrate on a sensor that has a fluid inside which reaches a temperature of 230 degrees Celsius, and that energy is used to generate the heat," which, in this case, MercaJúcar needs for the production of its mushrooms; therefore, its primary energy source is solar.

### SWEDEN

#### Potatoes seen as healthy product in Sweden

Over the last 10 years, potato consumption in Sweden has been stable, if not slightly increasing, compared to a majority of countries during the same time period, who saw potato sales drop. The Swedish consumer consumes around 83kg per capita of all potato products (including processed) and around 45 kg per capita of table potatoes.

Most of Swedish potato production, around 40%, takes place in the Southern region of Skane. The cold weather meant that there were less than normal quantities available at the start of the season in May, which caused prices to rise and now stabilise. After May, both supplies and prices went back to average and fair prices are expected through to mid-June.

Although some regions were affected more than others, Lars Elofson from Svensk Potatis said that overall there was not too much damage from the cold weather during April/May.

The potatoes are in good condition and with the current weather conditions, growers don't expect any issues this season.

Solist is the the most common early varieties, followed by other popular varieties later on in the season such as Magda and the Rocket. Solist is most common in the early summer, and are washed and packaged before being sold to the consumer. The variety is also popular with

organic producer because it is fast growing which helps decrease the chance of the potatoes developing blight.

Organic production continues to increase in Sweden, and is suspected to increase by around 3-5% this season. The tricky thing about organic production is that there are big profits for those who succeed, with twice as much return compared to conventional crops, however only around half of the crop typically makes it. It is thought that the situation will only improve with the constant development of more varieties which are more resistant to disease and fast growing.

### THE NETHERLAND

#### New supply of Senegalese organic mangos at OTC

One of the focus areas of OTC-Holland, distributor of organic fruit and vegetables, is to develop a supply of new products from new areas. By developing new projects and connecting new suppliers to OTC, the company hopes to respond better to market needs. OTC's first container of organic Kent mango from Senegal is expected in June.

It is the first time that OTC has offered organic mangos from Senegal. To accomplish that OTC works closely together with an organic growers cooperative in the southern Casamance region, embedded between Gambia and Guinea-Bissau.

The cooperative has 500 members, of which 70 are organic growers. What makes this cooperative so special is that

all members are active throughout the entire production chain: from cultivation to harvesting and from sorting to packaging. The mangos carry the label "Ecocert Responsible", which oversees the ethical, social and environmental procedures of the company. Besides that, the cooperative has its own organic certified packing station.

The cooperative is specialized in the cultivation of organic Kent mangos; a mango with stringless, juicy and very sweet flesh. For the next 6 weeks the mangos are available at OTC. After this period, OTC will continue with the supply of organic mangos from the north of Senegal until the Spanish season begins.

### USA

#### Harvest & workforce management in real time web-based application

The Steed brothers recently created PickTrace when they felt the need for a tracing system within their own San Diego family farm. "In the process of doing so, they found that there are other farms out there that have the same needs," explained Aly McCarthy of PickTrace.

The system has multiple applications for harvest and workforce management, accessed from a mobile phone. Results are downloaded into an online secure web management system. The workforce management component is what McCarthy says makes them more unique.

"Tracking time, attendance, and productivity of the employees was a challenge before they deployed PickTrace on the farm." Customers can move away from documenting on paper. Just having a system that tracks (details) and puts it into a report saves hours and hours of data entry," she said.

The system, as a whole, includes portable devices, an online interface, minimum wage and break calculations, mass time-card editing, multi-ranch analytics, automatic report-to-email capability, the ability to create new employees offline, real-time data and 24/7 support. ♦

