



By Mike Knowles

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Freshmax ready to play Piqa Boo

Australasian fresh produce company signs deal with Prevar to grow and market new trademarked pear cultivar



Piqa Boo pears are bright red and offer long shelf-life

New Zealand-based topfruit breeder-marketer Prevar has signed an agreement with the Australasian company Freshmax to develop sales of PremP009, a new pear set to be grown in Australia and marketed globally as Piqa Boo.

Bred by Plant & Food Research, the new cultivar is the first of a number of new cultivars expected to be released in the coming years and sold under the Piqa brand.

It combines characteristics from European, Japanese and Chinese pears, apparently giving the fruit a crisp, juicy texture and refreshing flavour, as well as exceptional storage and shelf-life.

Large-scale plantings are due to begin in Australia and New Zealand this year, with the first commercial harvest expected in 2016.

Freshmax Group chief executive Ross Kane welcomed the deal: "We believe there are excellent commercial

opportunities for these new fruits in Australia and in Asian export markets, and are excited for their future."

According to Kane, the pear category is in need of new and better varieties, and the fruit emerging from the Piqa programme could be a "significant catalyst" for that rejuvenation.

"The Piqa Boo brand cultivar is visually striking in both colour and shape and has a very appealing crisp texture and flavour, resulting in a very broad appeal to consumers," he added.

In good shape

Piqa Boo has a short pyriform shape, bright block red colour and small brown lenticels – the small pores seen on the surface of many apples and pears that give them a distinctive mottled look.

It is also said to have exceptional storage and shelf-life, developing a flavour characteristic of the Williams pear variety during coldstorage and offering the same ready-to-eat convenience of apples.

"These fruits should also be well received by younger consumers," said Andrew Maughan, national business manager for Holman Fresh, part of Freshmax and licence manager for the group.

"We have already assembled a very committed and entrepreneurial group of pear growers to commence the planting of this selection. Anyone else who wishes to participate in Australia should contact me."

For Prevar, teaming up with Freshmax offers it a great opportunity to make its vision for Piqa a reality, suggested chief executive Brett Ennis.

"The essential brand message for Piqa fruit is 'delightfully exotic', which captures the best elements of western and eastern pears fused together in this new range of fruits," he said. "We look forward to the range of opportunities this new brand will create."

The agreement with Freshmax represents a major step in terms of establishing a

supply base for Piqa Boo, with Prevar having already signed an [exclusive deal with UK importer Worldwide Fruit](#) to sell its new range in the country.

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