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Rijk Zwaan discusses cucumber research

Meetings with North American cucumber partners cover consumer preferences and shelf-life



Seed company Rijk Zwaan recently held a series of online meetings with greenhouse cucumber growers and marketing companies in North America, with the aim of discussing its latest research into consumers' purchasing preferences as well as shelf-life characteristics.

Although the current Covid-19 restrictions meant that it was not possible to meet in person, Rijk Zwaan was able to speak with its partners virtually by hosting the meetings from its own studio.

"The studio setting gives us the opportunity to hold personal, interactive and effective meetings while respecting and following all the Covid-19 safety regulations," said John DeVries, account manager at Rijk Zwaan.

Shelf-life

One interesting topic of discussion during the meetings was how packaging concepts for snack cucumbers can

minimise the use of plastics without reducing the shelf-life.

"We explained that one of our company strategies is aimed at producing cucumber varieties with an even longer shelf-life," said Heleen van Rijn-Wassenaar, specialist marketing pepper and cucumber at Rijk Zwaan. "We also talked about the supply-chain factors that can prolong shelf-life, as well as what consumers regard as indicators of a long shelf life when buying fresh produce."

Rijk Zwaan noted that some of its other goals take a much longer-term and broader perspective, such as food waste and carbon footprint.

Nikolaos Ntagkas, postharvest researcher at Rijk Zwaan, demonstrated during the meetings how storing snack cucumbers at the optimum temperature can extend their shelf-life and help to minimise waste.

"Much more information is shared about

other vegetable crops, but cucumbers are unique so it is important to share as much knowledge about these topics as possible," DeVries explained. "We are one of the world's largest suppliers of hybrid seeds to high-tech growers. Initiatives like these studio-based meetings enable our fresh produce chain partners to benefit from our extensive knowledge and experience. Meanwhile, we gain valuable new insights into current and future needs."

Rijk Zwaan's California-based retail manager, David Perie, is involved in every aspect of cucumbers after they leave the producer.

According to Perie, the group's research confirmed that consumer cucumber preferences were largely traditional, even amidst the current pandemic.

However, with strategic efforts to introduce new shapes and sizes, consumers are "reacting positively" to having more choice from snack to meal time.

<http://www.fruitnet.com/americafruit/article/1474/parts-of-san-diego-quarantined-as-psyllid-count-mounts>

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