



By Matthew Jones

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## T&G Global launches VentureFruit



A range of raspberry selections emerging from VentureFruit's partnership with Plant & Food Research

New global genetics business underpinned by partnerships with Plant & Food Research and Plant IP Partners

**T**&G Global has launched VentureFruit, a global genetics and variety management business.

The new venture will bring "new and superior" fruit to consumers, retailers and growers around the world, according to T&G Global.

Coinciding with its launch, VentureFruit has signed two key partnerships. It is co-investing in developing a range of new and unique berry varieties alongside Plant & Food Research.

It is also partnering with Plant IP Partners to test and evaluate new varieties of New Zealand-bred apples.

In addition to its two new partnerships, VentureFruit has an extensive pipeline of established premium apple, pear and berry varieties. It will provide its variety management services to T&G Global.

### Catering to berry boom

The partnership with Plant & Food Research is centred around the development and breeding of a range of unique new berries, including raspberries, boysenberries, blackberries and hybrid berries. This is being called the Rubus programme.

VentureFruit will be the strategic global commercialisation partner for this new range.

Peter Landon-Lane, managing director of VentureFruit, said the berries are being bred to meet consumer needs and increasing global consumption.

"Over the last ten years, global berry consumption has more than doubled and consumption per capita is expected to rise further, with high demand coming from Europe and North America," Landon-Lane explained.

"VentureFruit will help meet this growth through bringing high performing cultivars with unique characteristics to the market which not only deliver a better, more consistent product, but will extend the growing season and enable berries to be grown in different locations and soil types."

Landon-Lane said the berries in the Rubus programme are being strategically bred with robust flavours and distinctive colours – from yellow and orange to dark red.

"In addition, they'll be firm and able to produce high yields of quality fruit, which can be adapted to a range of environments and harvest windows," Landon-Lane added.

VentureFruit hopes to commence commercialisation of the new berry varieties "in the next few years". Commercialisation will start in New Zealand before moving internationally,

as plant material progresses through import quarantine, trials and evaluation in other countries.

## Understanding apple consumers

VentureFruit's partnership with Hawke's Bay-based breeder, Plant IP Partners, will initially see a test selection of new apple varieties planted in growing regions throughout New Zealand.

It is hoped these varieties will meet increasing consumer demand for early-season apples that deliver on taste and texture.

"VentureFruit is undertaking extensive sensory and insights research in key global markets on a wide range of apple varieties, which will help us understand consumer preferences and identify future growth opportunities," Landon-Lane said.

"From this, we'll be able to deliver unique new varieties which stand out from the crowd in today's highly competitive market."

Andrew Mackenzie, founding partner of Plant IP Partners, said his company was pleased to co-invest in this programme with VentureFruit.

"The aim is to develop varieties in New Zealand for global marketing," Mackenzie explained. "It's great to be associated with a significant global player with an impressive record of introducing superior genetics, premium produce, and innovation for consumers."

## Shaping a sustainable future

Gareth Edgecombe, chief executive of T&G Global, said unique plant genetics are critical to shaping the future of a sustainable, global fresh produce sector.

"With consumers' needs continually evolving, it's vital our sector delivers on taste, nutrition, convenience and sustainability," Edgecombe explained.

"We need to provide consumers and customers with great tasting, healthy fruit, and at the same time ensure that what we grow and the way we do it has a light footprint. Plant genetics play a pivotal role in delivering this.

"Through unique varieties, our sector can grow high-value premium fresh produce. With this, increased value will be generated for consumers, retailers, growers and communities, and we can help nurture our natural environment through adaptation and innovation."