



By Steven Maxwell

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Oppenheimer signs Brazilian grape deal

British Columbia-based company signs major grape supply deal with one of Brazil's leading growers

The Oppenheimer Group has signed a five-year agreement with Brazilian grape producer Fazendas Labrunier, linking its established Northern and Southern Hemisphere grape programmes with a solid supply of preferred varieties.

The Vancouver-based company has marketed Brazilian grapes for several years but aims to significantly increase imports from the country through the new relationship, which Oppenheimer believes will place it among the top Brazilian grape marketers in North America.

"Brazil plays a huge role in the autumn and early winter grape marketing period," said John Anderson, Oppenheimer's chairman,

president and CEO. "The Brazilian grape industry is fairly fragmented, so by aligning with the country's largest grower we can consistently meet the high demand for quality grapes as California winds down but before the Chilean fruit is available in large volume."

The highest-volume table grape grower in Brazil, Labrunier is comprised of five farms situated in the São Francisco Valley, encompassing 2,400ha, of which 900ha are allocated for grape production.

About 20 per cent of the total 2008 production will be exported to North America and represented by Oppenheimer, according to Josh Leichter, the company's grape category

director. The grower operates 13 packhouses and eight cold chambers, with a storage capacity of 1,700 pallets.

Labrunier has achieved certifications such as GLOBALGAP, Integrated Fruit Production (PIF), Guarantee of Origin by Carrefour, and Tesco Nature's Choice. The company is also in the process of obtaining two other important certifications: British Retail Consortium (BRC) and Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI).

"We'll begin shipping Brazilian grapes in October, and will bring the full assortment of varieties to the market through December," added Mr Leichter.