

For fresh fruit and vegetable marketing and distribution in Asia



By Mike Knowles

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BerryWorld is going global for growth



BerryWorld's stand at Fruit Logistica 2019 in Berlin

Leading soft fruit company celebrates 25th anniversary by targeting new expansion in different parts of the world

Fresh berry company BerryWorld Group wants to add to its recent success in the UK by repeating the same feat in other parts of the world.

Celebrating its 25th anniversary this year, the UK berry market is certainly one of its major success stories: there, it has cornered about 25 per cent of the berry market, which itself has enjoyed such strong growth that it now represents nearly 25 per cent of all the fresh fruit sold in the country.

BerryWorld is aiming to transform itself into a truly international company over the next few years by continuing to develop breeding programmes that turn out high-quality, proprietary varieties, and then using its marketing expertise to sell that fruit and grow its share of various consumer markets.

The group was at Fruit Logistica in Berlin last week to underline that bold ambition. With offices in seven countries

and breeding programmes around the world, the company is confident that gaining exclusive access to the best new genetic material will set it apart in the eyes of retailers and consumers.

According to chief executive Adam Olins, BerryWorld's principles remain very much the same as they were two and a half decades ago. The group prides itself on long-standing grower relationships, proprietary breeding and an exclusive varietal offer, he explains, as well as expertise in marketing berries and prepared fruit.

"All of the achievements and success we have seen in recent years have only been possible because of our hard-working teams and talented, dedicated people," he tells Fruitnet, observing that the original five staff members – Olins himself, alongside Dave Ashton, Angie Halfhide, Tim Newton and Susan Woods – are all still with the company. "I would like to take the opportunity to celebrate our people and thank them for their service to the business," he adds.

That success has been most evident in its home market the UK, where it has grown its turnover consistently since its foundation as a marketing desk in 1994. In doing so, it has played a pivotal role in growing the country's fresh berry retail market from £100m to more than £1.4bn. More recently, it has helped the category to expand in other parts of the world such as mainland Europe and Australia. Now, through a new joint venture project with tomato marketer Mastronardi Farms, it is targeting further growth in North America.

Later this year, further changes to the group's brand identity will be introduced. "To mark our 25-year milestone, we are excited to announce we will be launching a newly designed brand during the course of 2019," reveals Charlotte Knowles, head of brand and marketing. Its BerryWorld and Beekers Berries brands are already recognised as premium trademarks, while a significant volume of its premium fruit is sold under retail private labels.

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

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Remaining competitive

BerryWorld's successful expansion has come in different forms over the past quarter century. Since it secured an agreement with UK grower Edward Vinson in 1998, the group has launched a number of new and exclusive strawberries offering excellent taste. It has expanded its glasshouse production and introduced Sweet Eve-trademarked genetics that are now grown and sold in the UK, Europe and Australia, with North America on the horizon.

For blueberries, meanwhile, BerryWorld's deal two years ago to secure the exclusive rights to the Mountain Blue Orchards' breeding programme in Europe and Africa has apparently strengthened its offer and helped it remain competitive in a market where consumers now demand better flavour, bigger size and longer shelf-life. Some of the latest varieties from that programme have even scooped iTQi's Superior Taste awards.

Four years ago, BerryWorld introduced its first premium exclusive raspberry variety, Sapphire, a variety it describes as "game changing" in growing sales at the premium end of the market. The company has also released Diamond Jubilee to drive the growth of the core raspberry offer and the variety is now available across the UK, Europe, Australia, South Africa and North America.

Seasonal shifts

Alongside that continual development of new varieties, BerryWorld has also worked hard to extend seasons and fill gaps in supply at traditionally challenging times of the year.

"Summer remains the biggest part of the berry season, but over the last ten years, the import season has become more popular with shoppers," Olins explains. "Penetration during the winter has grown throughout Europe

with more shoppers buying berries during this period."

The winter market in the UK itself is now worth an estimated £450m compared with £170m as recently as 2008. BerryWorld says it has continued to innovate in the market, seeing great growth for retailers with the launch of its brand, larger packs and innovative ways to sell excess fruit during so-called crop flushes.

"The business has come a long way over the last 25 years with nearly one in four punnets in the UK market now supplied by BerryWorld," Olins adds. "The journey for us and our exclusive varieties is now gaining pace in Europe, Australia, South Africa and North America."