Search for Zespri red kiwifruit goes on

By Mike Knowles

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New Zealand marketer Zespri has revealed that its search for a red-fleshed kiwifruit will continue over the coming months after the results of a pre-commercial trial in Singapore failed to convince the group it had the right cultivar for a full-scale commercial launch.

With an eye on potential new growth for the kiwifruit category particularly in Asia, the company has been looking for a red variety for a number of years and, towards the end of 2014, was believed to be closer than ever to introducing such a product.

However, in its annual review, Zespri revealed that the red kiwifruit trialled in Singapore last year didn't tick all of the boxes as far as benefiting consumers, growers and the group's own portfolio were concerned.

"While the testing was very positively received by consumers [in Singapore], the decision was made to continue the search through thousands of new red seedlings in the breeding programme, for a premium-quality red kiwifruit with good colour, flavour, size, yield, storage qualities and resilience to Psa," it explained.

Zespri's breeding programme, which is managed in partnership with NZ-based science company Plant & Food Research, currently has both a red and a green cultivar in pre-commercial trials.

The green cultivar is described as a "great-tasting" fruit with apparently higher yield than Hayward.

"Delivering kiwifruit's strong health benefits, [this] would be another great addition to the Zespri portfolio," the group added.

This article was updated on 2 July to remove mention of Zespri's general manager for marketing, Carol Ward, to whom Zespri's comments were erroneously attributed.