



By Maura Maxwell

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PSB moves in on late season apricot window



PSB Produccion Vegetal has high hopes for its new range of bicoloured apricots, says Thomas Chevaillier

Can you tell us about your late-season apricot varietal breeding programme?

Thomas Chevaillier: Our new range of extra-late bicoloured apricot varieties, which are marketed under the Red Buffalo brand name, comprises 11 new varieties that can be harvested from mid-July right up to the beginning of September.

The apricot season is relatively short in comparison to other types of stonefruit, and after July growers typically keep fruit in storage for a month so that they can fetch better prices on the market.

We know that consumers want to eat exceptional apricots throughout the summer so developing varieties to extend the season has been one of the prime objectives of breeding programmes in recent years.

However, although many of the new varieties score highly on yield, colour

and firmness, flavour has been the one characteristic that has been lacking – until now. Our new varieties combine a high brix level, aromatic taste and crunchy-yet-juicy texture with an attractive deep orange colour with a red blush which chimes perfectly with consumer tastes.

Are the varieties already being grown commercially?

TC: They are already being grown in France, Spain and Italy and we are working with a total of 20 countries worldwide, including South Africa, Chile, Australia and Turkey. In a few years' time we hope to have production in all of these countries. Although the quantities being produced are still small, we've received a very good response from buyers. We can only hope that their uptake from the market will be similarly enthusiastic.

How do you see the potential to develop the apricot market in the medium to long term?

TC: There's no doubt that growers and exporters face a difficult future – every year brings stricter certification requirements while prices continue to fall, and there is so much variability in quality that consumers are often put off. Developing a good new variety is one solution but it is not the only answer. Every member of the supply chain, from the grower through to the retailer, must work together to improve quality and increase sales.