CPM Retail launches new berry in the UK

Blue Honeysuckle is being grown by the New Forest Fruit Company and will be available on shelves from June 2016

Soft-fruit supplier and AG Thames subsidiary CPM Retail is launching a new berry to the UK market in partnership with grower New Forest Fruit Company, FPJ can reveal.

Blue Honeysuckle, also known as Haskap, is shaped like a rectangle blueberry, and tastes like a cross between a blueberry, blackberry and raspberry. Its tangy flavour means it is ideal for the processing sector, in the form of relishes, jam or juices, but there is also potential in fresh.

The move is an expansion of CPM’s Blue Honeysuckle production in Poland, which is currently shipped frozen to a customer in Canada. As the largest of three UK-based trials, the New Forest Fruit Company is growing 15,000 Blue Honeysuckle plants and trialling both Canadian and Polish varieties, on a 4.5ha site expected to produce one tonne of berries this season. The business has invested £250,000 in total, with financial support from CPM.

New Forest Fruit Company managing director, Sandy Booth, said the “product potential is endless”. “We want to find someone to produce jams, relishes and other products for us” he said. “You see a lot of new varieties, but you hardly ever see an entirely new fruit. It’s really interesting as something fundamentally different.”

The berry’s major attractions are high levels of antioxidants, twice the level of a blueberry, and its early harvest window – outdoor fruit will be available in the UK from mid June, but growers can use CPMs existing routes into the frozen market to generate year-round supply and income.

BegnAT Robichaud, commercial director of CPM, said: “There is lots of interest from retailers, we just have some work to do on how to market Blue Honeysuckle, on both pack size and public education. Blue Honeysuckle berries have a short harvesting window and are only available to buy fresh for three to four weeks. However, there are new varieties being planted, which should enable seasonal extension in a few years.”

Native to Siberia and Japan, Blue Honeysuckle is naturally hardy and is currently being grown by the New Forest Fruit Company in soil, rather than pots.