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By Ed Leahy

Thursday 30th April 2020, 17:16 GMT

Hochfeld Intl announces new China JV



UK-based firm Hochfeld International will "significantly increase" sales of seedless grapes to China following deal with packer Zhuang 'an

Hochfeld International has wrapped up a new joint venture with a Chinese fruit packer, to increase seedless grape sales in the world's largest country.

Richard Hochfeld Group's director of business development Martin O'Sullivan, said the new JV will "significantly increase" their sales of seedless grapes to China, which he said currently had an underdeveloped seedless grape market.

Hochfeld International is the international trading arm of UK-based Richard Hochfeld, which specialises in the grape category.

The firm agreed the partnership with Zhuang 'an, a fruit packer and distributor based in Jiaxing, China. The JV business has officially been registered as Jiaxing Hi Fruit Impoart & Export Co Ltd, but will be referred to as Hi Fruit in short, consisting of a packing operation for seedless grapes, at a state-of-the-art facility in Jiaxing.

"Our key objective is to add value to the product we supply into our Chinese customers," said O'Sullivan.

"The seedless grape category is relatively underdeveloped in China. Consumers like high-coloured, premium fruit, but awareness of the range of varieties doesn't widely exist yet. But it is an innovative category and by packing the product to a high hygienestandard, Hi Fruit will aim to increase the potential to sell the value proposition of seedless grapes and move away from them being sold as a commodity.

"Richard Hochfeld Group are the seedless grape experts," he added, "whether that be through our farming operations or our technical team based in the UK, who have been working with grape for decades.

"We have proved in the UK that we can educate customers on what each variety will give them and what taste sensations they can expect. We can do that in China

too, and one way to communicate the message effectively is through labelled, packaged products. Through this JV, we can do that."

RHG will install a new line in the Hi Fruit packhouse, working alongside long-standing partner Marco, which supplies packhouse productivity managementsolutions.

Chen Jianmin, chairman of Zhuang 'an thanked managing director Alan Guindi and the entire Richard Hochfeld Group staff for striking the new partnership.

"Zhuang 'an has been involved in the cultivation, procurement and sales of fresh, safe fruit and vegetables for more than 10 years and we have been well received by farmers, recognised by customers and supported by our government.," Jianmin said.

"This JV with RHG will bring the highest quality and most advanced packing line to China and enable us to better serve our customer base in the Chinese market,

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

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which includes Yum (KFC and Pizza Hut), Metro, LinHua Supermarket and Dingdong ecommerce, amongst others. We believe that our collaboration will be have a great success.”

O’Sullivan concluded: “We envisage that this venture

will enable us to significantly increase our sales of seedless grapes in China. At the moment there is a limited, but growing market for packed seedless grapes, but in doing this, we’re opening up market access to China for a greater proportion of our product.”

Hochfeld International will continue to directly supply its other wholesale and retail customers in China with loose seedless grapes and other products.