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By Mike Knowles

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Fruitbox: The secret of berries' success



Soren Bjorn of Driscoll's explains why, despite being primarily an impulse purchase, fresh berry sales have rocketed

Soren Bjorn, president of leading berry brand Driscoll's, believes the category's success of development of year-round supply in the soft category offers an important lesson for everyone in the fresh fruit and vegetable business.

Speaking in the latest episode of Fruitnet's interview series Fruitbox, Bjorn explains how the berry category has not only benefited from being right on trend as far as flavour, health and convenience are concerned, but has generally succeeded in offering the right quality all through the year, rather than only in peak seasons.

That lack of quality is not always evident in other categories, most notably stonefruit, he argues.

"A lot of times, the first thing a consumer tries is those really early peaches from somewhere where you really shouldn't grow peaches and that just don't taste of anything," he comments. "And by the time you get to the really good peaches

in the middle of summer, the consumers have already left the category. I think the berry category has generally done a better job."

That's not to say the soft fruit industry itself doesn't face its own challenges in terms of guaranteeing quality. As Bjorn points out, recent dramatic growth in sales of blueberries has led to some lower-quality fruit being produced in countries including Peru and Spain.

"The advantage is that most growers made quite a bit of money, so they have the cash to reinvest in the genetics and upgrade the genetics pretty quickly," he comments. "But that's what they will need to do, because they general offer that's there today, it will just not be competitive in three or four years."

Hosted by Chris White in London, Fruitbox now attracts a big audience across the global fruit and vegetable business that tunes in twice a week to hear exclusive interviews and expert analysis.

Produced by Fruitnet Media International, the show is essential listening for everyone in the fresh produce industry.

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