



By Matthew Jones

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Costa Group opens Moroccan berry facility

Multi-million dollar operation set to handle up to 12,000 tonnes of blueberries per year

A new 10,000m² packing facility will position Costa Group's African Blue operations at the forefront of Morocco's berry export trade.

The multi-million dollar facility, located in Larache, has been designed to handle up to 12,000 tonnes of blueberries per year and is capable of processing 150 tonnes per day.

Costa Berry International general manager, Peter McPherson, said this was a further major investment by the Australian-headquartered Costa Group in Morocco through its majority owned companies African Blue and Sweet Berry, which service markets throughout Europe.

"This facility will enhance the quality and reputation of Costa Group's world leading blueberry genetics, which have been grown in Morocco for over a decade," McPherson said.

The blueberry varieties that we grow

give us a distinct competitive advantage in the United Kingdom, European Union and Russia as we are able to deliver a premium fresh product into those markets."

Around 200 people attended the new facility's official opening, including Australia's first ambassador to Morocco, Berenice Owen-Jones. Government officials, key customers and service providers were also in attendance.

The opening coincided with a visit to Australia by Aziz Akhannouch, Morocco's minister of agriculture, fisheries, rural development, water and forests. Akhannouch toured one of Costa's berry farms in Corindi, New South Wales, to gain an insight into the Australian operations.

Costa acquired a majority ownership stake in African Blue in late 2017. Its Moroccan production area covers 294ha, with supply also coming from an additional 108ha belonging to licensed third-party growers. Further

development is currently being undertaken to extend the length of the Moroccan season, including plantings at Agadir on the Atlantic Ocean.

In addition to the Moroccan operations, Costa operates three berry farms in China with more than 100ha.



Australian ambassador to Morocco, Berenice Owen-Jones (second from right), and Costa Berry International general manager, Peter McPherson (far right), open the new facility

