



By Tom Joyce

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BelOrta kicks off cherry season

Belgian cooperative BelOrta reported the first sale of the new cherry season this week, with the proceeds going to NGO Kom Op Tegen Kanker



This week, Belgian cooperative BelOrta kicked off the cherry campaign with the first sales of the season, in the presence of minister of agriculture Hilde Crevits.

The proceeds of €7,500 were donated to Kom Op Tegen Kanker, a non-profit organisation that stands up for the right of patients to the best treatment and care and the right of people to a healthy living environment.

The Belgian cherry season runs from mid-June to early August, and the message from BelOrta this campaign is to fully enjoy local cherries from start to finish.

Consumption of cherries, as well as other soft fruit, has been rising sharply in Belgium, revealed BelOrta. In 2019, Belgian consumers purchased an average of 2.9kg of soft fruit, including 0.5kg of cherries, according to figures from Gfk.

Crevits paid tribute to the hard work of the growers. "Our growers guarantee tasty and healthy fruit and vegetables of a high quality every day," she said. "Consumers love the wide range of fruit that comes to the store with a lot of love, innovative techniques and hard work. The fact that our fruit growers jointly take initiatives, invest and constantly renew through the cooperative BelOrta shows their enormous

resilience. And with the donation of the proceeds of the first cherries to Kom Op Tegen Kanker, they also show their warm heart. That's the icing on the cake!"

Once the cherries have been harvested and taken to action, they are immediately hydro-cooled in order to extend the fruit's shelf life, before being sorted using the latest electronic sorter.

"This makes it possible to create extremely homogeneous batches of equal varieties, grades and qualities," BelOrta explained. "During the sorting process, the cherries are also packed directly in the correct final packaging in order to avoid the need for any additional handling."