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### **New partnerships bring bigger, tastier berries to market**

Consumers across the world may soon be experiencing tastier, fuller-sized blueberries year-round, thanks to two new partnerships in blueberries that will bring premium quality berries with superior genetics, in secured volumes, to customers across the world.

T&G Global and science organisation Plant & Food Research have announced they are entering into a new agreement to breed and commercialise exciting new varieties of blueberries to be sold globally.

The breeding programme will produce new varieties of blueberry that will provide improved yield and resistance to disease while also delivering consumers larger, tastier berries over a longer period, with an extended harvest season.

The first new commercial varieties could be launched globally in the next 12 months under T&G Global's Orchard Rd brand.

"Blueberries are a key strategic play for us in building our global portfolio, and we're delighted to build another global category to emulate the success of our premium apple brands. We know there is strong consumer demand for blueberries and teaming up with Plant & Food means we get access to a pipeline of world-class varieties," says Gareth Edgecombe, CEO of T&G Global.

"Securing exclusive rights to the best varieties is the first step in our strategy to build multiple global verticals that drive and enable value and add demand through strong consumer brands," he says.

The new partnership builds on an existing agreement that grants the global fresh produce grower and marketer, T&G Global, access to a suite of Plant & Food Research-bred and licensed blueberry varieties for production in Australia.

"Plant & Food Research and T&G Global have a strong relationship that began at their legacy organisations in the 1990s," says David Hughes, CEO Plant & Food Research.

"T&G has an excellent track record of commercialising our varieties, most notably the apples branded JAZZ™ and Envy™. We are looking forward to continuing building on this history and delivering excellent blueberries for New Zealand and global consumers," he says.

## **Teaming up with CarSol**

In a further development, T&G Global has agreed to a joint venture with one of the world's largest berry growers, CarSol Fruit Export, enabling the year-round supply and sale of high-quality berries into the lucrative Asian market in future.

CarSol, a blueberry multi-national based out of the Netherlands, started its operation in Chile around 30 years. It has expanded its footprint in recent years beyond its home growing base in Chile to grow blueberries in Peru and Portugal, utilising new genetics and modern growing methods. The company brings strong commercial experience in the Europe and US markets and decades of expertise in growing, sourcing, packing and shipping of blueberries worldwide.

Over the past few years, T&G Global has been working with CarSol to source blueberries for its customers, however the closer partnership will allow T&G Global to deliver more value by combining CarSol's deep expertise in blueberry growing and commercial experience with T&G's sales and marketing experience in Asia.

"We see this as the beginning of a long-term partnership that will give us the ability to source the highest quality supply of blueberries from their global grower base and, working together, build out Asia," Edgecombe says.

T&G Global has ambitious plans and aims to significantly increase sales of blueberries into key Asian markets in 2020 under the Orchard Rd brand, via the new strategic partnership, he says.

"With our combined strengths in growing, sales and marketing, we're looking to ramp up the velocity with key customers in Asia, build the Orchard Rd to greater heights, to replicate the international success we have had with JAZZ™ and Envy™ brands."

CEO of CarSol Fruit Export, Sebastián Carmona says their biggest strength is that they are a customer-driven business. Their philosophy is to run the business from customer demand back to their farming operations where they grow, pack and ship the fruit themselves. This gives complete control over the entire process and guarantees retailers a consistent and year-round supply of premium berries.

"With global production of blueberries set to increase exponentially in the next few years, quality will be the critical factor in driving consumer demand."

"We've been investing in order to expand our production and commercial network to become a year-round, leading global player in this industry. We see this partnership as an opportunity to reach the highest growth potential market in the years to come, particularly with T&G's unique knowledge of the Asian market," Carmona says.

He says both companies share similar values regarding sustainability and have a customer focused culture, opening up possibilities for further integration in future.

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