

FOCUS: BERRIES, GRAPES & VINEYARDS

New table grape varieties on the way

New Canadian fresh grape varieties will expand growers' offerings and fill up shelf space with flavour profiles that meet market demand. The Consumer Insights team at Vineland is working to ensure the new varieties are exactly what consumers are looking for.

In partnership with the Ontario Fresh Grape Growers, Vineland hosted a grower/retailer open house to showcase new scouted varieties on the vine this past fall.

The Jupiter grape, developed at the University of Arkansas, was the most appealing by more than 75 per cent of participants. All attendees named Jupiter as the variety with the most commercial potential and commented on its flavour, sweet taste, berry size and shape, as well as colour.

Vineland's Consumer

Insights team also completed focus groups on blue and green grapes and found some unique insights including:

- Consumers are receptive to new Ontario varieties even though there is little recognition of the fresh grape industry in the province
- Grape varieties are recognized by colour and not by name
- While texture and appearance are important, taste/flavour are key
- Jupiter was picked as the top variety in blue grape focus groups for taste/flavour
- Participants liked the unique, muscat flavour of Jupiter and that it tasted differently from varieties they are accustomed to
- Consumers in general don't look for blue grapes. This

perception will need to change and be supported through marketing efforts

Next steps in this project include consumer information to develop a commercial name for Jupiter with the goal of introducing to retail by 2022. This project was funded in part through Growing Forward 2 (GF2), a federal-provincial-territorial initiative. The Agricultural Adaptation Council assists in the delivery of GF2 in Ontario.

For more information, contact Michael Kauzlaric, technology scout and grower outreach, Vineland at 905-562-0320 x 755 or Michael.kauzlaric@vinelandresearch.com.

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Jupiter grapes at Vineland's test block.

Introducing Dr. Beatrice Amyotte, Small Fruit Germplasm Development Program

The berry breeding program at the Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) Kentville Research and Development

Centre in Kentville, Nova Scotia, is now the Small Fruit Germplasm Development Program.

The new approach to plant breeding will allow the fruit industry to be more involved in the release of new Canadian varieties of strawberries, raspberries, blackberries and grapes that are developed from a bigger, hand-picked genetic pool of superior plant traits.

The Centre currently has a collection of more than a thousand different selections of the fruit and is looking to significantly expand it with new material from genebanks in Canada, the United States and Europe.

"The objective in germplasm development is to create variation," says Dr. Beatrice Amyotte, who joined the research centre this year as a lead researcher with the new program. "We can use that variation to not only develop plants with interesting traits that are commercially valuable but also plants that can be used for further research."

"There is going to be plant material that will be quite different from what producers have seen before. They'll have a chance to evaluate it in their own growing conditions and decide which of these plants should become varieties."

For more than 100 years, the berry breeding program in Kentville developed commercial plant varieties from start to finish. These included popular strawberry varieties such as the large-fruited 'Annapolis,' the early-fruited 'AC Wendy' and the easy-picking 'AAC Lila.'

But the department has been hearing from the members of the Canadian fruit industry who have been asking for a bigger



Dr. Beatrice Amyotte is the lead researcher in Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's new Small Fruit Germplasm Development Program at Kentville Research and Development Centre in Kentville, Nova Scotia.

role in deciding which plant selections become commercial varieties.

A recent departmental survey of the Canadian strawberry industry found strong support for early testing of new strawberry selections by industry across the country.

AAFC will develop a new commercialization model so that interested growers and nurseries will have the opportunity to test, select and name the small fruit varieties that are best suited for their growing environments and production systems.

The Kentville Small Fruit Germplasm Development Program will continue to develop new, unnamed small fruit selections which can be tested across Canada.

National and provincial stakeholder organizations will be notified directly when new

small fruit plants are available for testing.

"Industry engagement is key to the germplasm program's success," says Dr. Amyotte. "Input from growers and stakeholders will be used to determine trait priorities for germplasm development."

Dr. Amyotte says she's hoping to hear from more producers and fruit industry representatives from across the country to get their thoughts and priorities.

"That's a priority for me," she says. "My goal is to try and help you grow the best fruit for your customers and environment, so tell me about what you want to see in terms of plant traits. I want to hear from you."

You can reach Dr. Amyotte at Beatrice.amyotte@canada.ca.

Source: Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

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