

Summerkiwi links up with the south

Now established as a fully international supplier group with European and South American membership, the Summerkiwi Association is developing its counter-seasonal volumes

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With Fruit Logistica appointing Chile as its partner country for 2009, this year's event seems an appropriate opportunity for the Summerkiwi Association to introduce its newly established Chilean arm, the Corporacion Summerkiwi Chile.

Members of the association, which also includes founding members in Italy and France, are aiming to build on the recent successful development of the early harvesting, sweet kiwifruit variety Summerkiwi, which is steadily becoming a well-known and appreciated product that is licensed and marketed along similar lines to club varieties in the apple sector. The group recently signed a deal with Enza / Turners & Growers to develop production of the variety in New Zealand, with the ultimate aim to supply markets in New Zealand, Australia and South Africa.

As well as production of 3,500 tonnes in Italy, 1,300 tonnes in France and 100 in Portugal this season, the group expects to have some 700 tonnes available from Chile and 400 tonnes from Argentina later this year. "Product will be shipped from the beginning of March and placed in the market from the end of March, early April, depending on the destination," reveals



Giampaolo Dal Pane, Summerkiwi Association

Giampaolo Dal Pane, director of Ravenna-based marketing company Summerfruit.

But there is some concern that the economic climate could impact on demand in Europe. "The general economic situation is complicated and its effects are being felt in the fresh produce market," says Mr Dal Pane. "At the beginning of November we noted a slow but inevitable downturn in the volume of Hayward kiwifruit and several other products being sold, as well as a fall in consumption. This is rather worrying, although we still hope to achieve good results from our first counter-seasonal campaign given the fact that volumes are not high."



The Rubens Club, which includes members from different areas of the production chain based in Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark, Austria and Switzerland, has been set up to promote the Rubens apples variety as it hits a number of European supermarkets for the first time this season.

The apple, which was developed in Italy as a natural cross between Gala and Elstar, has received positive feedback for its unique, easy-to-bite flesh that has earned it the nickname 'easy crunch' apple. "The introduction of this variety needs experience, professional skills and management besides adequate financial means," says Rubens Club MD Herbert Knuppen.



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