

REPORT

—Rijk Zwaan

**INNOVATIONS
HIGHLIGHTED AT
FUTURE LAB**

Having won the original Fruit Logistica Innovation Award in 2006 for its Salanova salad brand, it was fitting that Rijk Zwaan chose Berlin as the backdrop to launch its latest concept, the Sweet Palermo pepper a decade later.

According to marketing and business development manager Jan Doldersum, winning the original innovation prize opened a lot of doors for the company, whose Salanova line continues to expand and conquer global markets ten years on. During an insightful Future Lab presentation on branding concepts at Fruit Logistica, Doldersum explained the power of brands to make an emotional connection with businesses and the end consumer, conveying the story behind a product. A successful brand requires the collaboration of the whole supply chain – the retailer, in particular, must be convinced of the value it brings to their business.

Citing examples such as Crunchy Cos, Salanova, Caribbean melons, Cubelli tomatoes and, most recently, Sweet Palermo peppers, Doldersum highlighted the importance of strong and cohesive branding, social media, innovative packaging and original in-store presentations in making an impact. “Together with our partners we have the capacity, the network and the opportunities to grow the fruit and vegetable category and stimulate worldwide consumption,” he said. *MM*

Pepper push for Rijk Zwaan

DE LIER—Dutch group will roll out several new, innovative products in 2015, with a particular focus on its innovative and tasty Sweet Palermo pepper.

by Carl Collen

Never a company to rest on its laurels, Dutch vegetable seed specialist Rijk Zwaan is celebrating a positive 12 months while also looking forward to the next generation of innovative products that it will release onto the market this year.

“Last year was a really good year for Rijk Zwaan,” Jan Doldersum, marketing and business development manager, tells EUROFRUIT. “We have made some operational changes and expanded, opening a new facility in the south of France. The company has grown at an average pace of over 10 per cent – over the past 20 years. We passed the €300m turnover mark in 2014 and successfully introduced several new products including Crunchy Cos, Sweet Palermo, and the expansion of our Salanova range.”

Sweet Palermo, is a sweet-tasting pointed pepper that Rijk Zwaan says has been grown over many years, but will be getting a particularly strong push this year. Currently predominantly produced in Spain, the variety is now within everyone’s reach thanks to the formation of the Palermo Originals Group, an exclusive network of growers who are all specialised in the production of Sweet Palermo – the idea being that each grower guarantees a consistent quality and availability.



ABOVE—The Sweet Palermo on display at this year’s Fruit Logistica in Berlin
OPPOSITE PAGE—Jan Doldersum with Salanova, original winner of the Fruit Logistica Innovation Award

Rijk Zwaan says that the Sweet Palermo stands out from regular pointed or blocky peppers due to its smooth and straight look, a softer skin and few seeds when cutting or biting into the pepper, and a uniquely subtle and sweet taste. Indeed, a panel of experts from Wageningen University & Research Centre have established that the Sweet Palermo has a ‘unique flavour’.

“After just one bite of the Sweet Palermo you’ll be hooked and there’s nothing you can do about it,” the group says. “There is an explanation for it though, based on hard science. The reason lies in the pepper’s brix values. Whereas the sweetest regu-

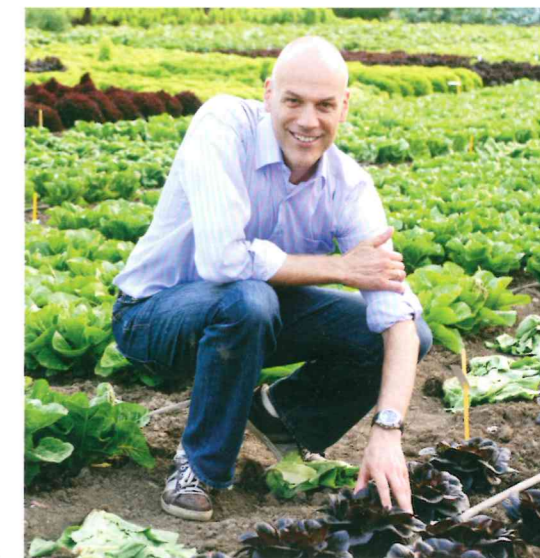
lar blocky pepper has a maximum brix value of seven, the Sweet Palermo achieves a brix of nine. As a result of this, combined with its rich aroma of fruits and fresh herbs, the Sweet Palermo scored highly in taste tests, even by children. “The importance of eating fruit and vegetables is becoming increasingly widely accepted, and the Sweet Palermo can help even the fussiest eaters to enjoy a more varied diet fit for a true gastronome.” The Sweet Palermo is aligned with the convenience trend, given its status as either a cooking ingredient or a snack product, is rich in nutrition, and boasts a strong brand that is easily recognisable.

Away from the pepper category, 2015 is expected to be a productive year for Rijk Zwaan in other areas, with a particular focus on building long-term retail partnerships, according to Doldersum. “This year we will

“This year we will be looking to intensify our service offering to retail, with the aim of building lasting relationships”

be looking to intensify our service offering to retail, the aim is to build lasting relationships with retailers,” he explains.

“In terms of new products, we will introduce Silky Pink and Internal Red in the tomato category, and there will also be a push for our Sensational Traditions product line – celebrating unique varieties that capture the essence of traditional and authentic products with the guarantees required by today’s pro-



duction and distribution systems,” Doldersum adds. “These include the Bi-coloured cucumber, the Couer de Boeuf tomato, the Dark Pole bean, the Green Cauliflower and Purple Kohlrabi.” *E*

surprisingly sweet pepper

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