

# Sun World prepares to plant varieties on Australian soils

Sun World-branded fruit will soon be marketed to Asia in California's off-season, following the US company's move to license its varieties to Australian growers

Sun World International has appointed the Australian Nurseryman's Fruit Improvement Company (ANFIC) to introduce and promote its licensed fruit varieties to Australia. ANFIC, a 12-member nursery consortium with facilities and representatives throughout Australia, will



**Sun World's MIDNIGHT BEAUTY® (Sugrathirteen)**

manage the importation, evaluation, and commercialisation of Sun World's table grapes, plums, peaches, nectarines and apricots, said Sun World's senior vice president David Marguleas. The California-based company has sent nearly 60 different new fruit varieties to Australia, a number of which are currently being evaluated by ANFIC for potential commercial production. Some are ready for grower evaluation while others will become available in the coming year or two. Selected growers will be licensed to produce these proprietary varieties. All fruit will be sold under license by designated marketing companies.

Sun World is best known for its early-ripening green seedless grapes, marketed under the Superior Seedless brand and its black skinned, red flesh plums marketed under the Black Diamond brand. More recent introductions include an early-ripening black seedless grape marketed under the Midnight Beauty brand and early-ripening high flavour apricots marketed under the Honeycot brand. These varieties are developed by Sun World's privately-funded breeding programme, and released by its Research & Development Centre.

"Australia is an important fruit producing country, both for its own domestic market and for its proximity to key Asian markets," said Mr Marguleas. Sun World's grape and plum varieties are exported from the US to Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Japan. "Asian customers have expressed a keen interest in being able to source these same varieties counterseasonally," he continued. "Australian production of our varieties - particularly with respect to some of our new seedless grapes, plums and early-ripening peaches allows us to stretch our production capabilities and give Asian and Australian supermarkets access to Sun World varieties and brands throughout their summer as well as our own."

While Australia holds obvious strategic importance to Sun World, Mr Marguleas forecasts that the country's producers and marketers would also benefit from this demand for more continuous supply of proprietary products. He noted that its Black Diamond plums had been particularly well received in Asia. "We produce these plums in California and ship them to key customers in Asia each July and August," he stated.

"Australian production, combined with production from selected other

countries in the future, enables us to satisfy demand for these and other plums during the Southern Hemisphere summer months of January and February." He also identified significant potential to develop Australian production of the company's early ripening peaches and apricots, and its new seedless grape varieties. "We've seen how well our Sugraone (Superior Seedless brand) variety can perform in most growing districts so we have no doubt that many of our other cultivars will adapt nicely to Australia," argued Mr Marguleas. Interest in Sun World's Sugraone is growing in Asia, particularly in Hong Kong and Japan. "We're confident that our early ripening Sun World grapes such as Sugrathirteen (pictured) (Midnight Beauty brand) and Sugratwelve (Coachella Seedless) could be important export grapes from Australia in the future," said Mr Marguleas.

The Sun World grape varieties are expected to be cultivated throughout Australia's main growing regions, including Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia. Victoria is set to dominate the licensing of its peach, plum and apricot varieties.

Selected grape cultivars are forecast to produce some commercial volumes as early as 4-5 years time from this season, according to Mr Marguleas. "Some of the more advanced stonefruit materials should be around five to six years away," he claimed. "It's too early to tell what kind of volumes will be exported from or distributed in Australia in the coming years."

Sun World's varieties will be produced under license by selected, qualified growers throughout the country, according to Mr Marguleas. "Participating growers will need to respect our intellectual property rights, produce fruit meeting our quality specifications, and where applicable, pay annual fruit production royalties for the right to grow our varieties and market fruit using trademarks," he claimed. The company's move into Australia represents the latest step in developing a global network of licensed growers and export marketers. In addition to production from its California vineyards and orchards, Sun World licensees grow its proprietary varieties in North America, Australia, the Middle East and South Africa.

Meanwhile, Sun World recently appointed the New Zealand Fruit Tree Company to assist with introducing and trialling its fruit varieties in New Zealand. "New Zealand offers great promise as a quality producer of Sun World plums and apricots," said Mr Marguleas. "Production in New Zealand will enable us to satisfy domestic demand as well as demand in key Asian markets," he commented.