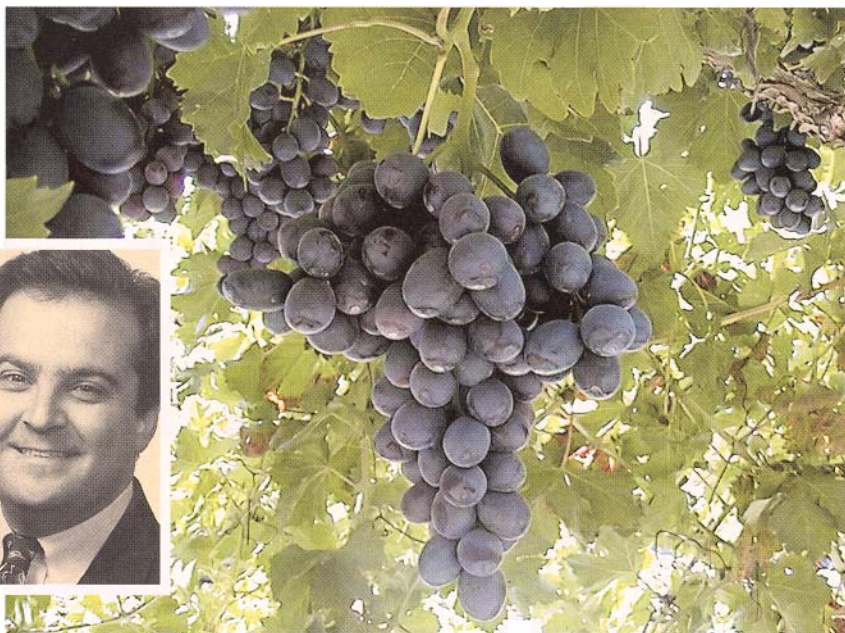


Sun World charts new cultivar course in Europe

The US producer believes that increased production of its Sugarthirteen grape variety, marketed under the Midnight Beauty brand, will bolster opportunities in Europe. **Doris Lee Butterworth** spoke to Sun World's David Marguleas

Sun World International is confident that its Midnight Beauty variety will find favour in Europe. To date, the cultivar has only been grown in the US, but this is set to change as Sun World recently introduced the variety to its licensees in South Africa,



Chile and Spain. Eventually, the cultivar will also be produced by Sun World licensees in Italy. "The two countries are significant suppliers to Europe and we should see very light commercial volumes from both areas in the 2002/03 season," said David Marguleas, Sun World senior vice president licensing and corporate development. He added that larger volumes would be available in 2005. Armed with limited Midnight Beauty volumes, the US-based producer is targeting the UK market where consumers have reacted favourably to seedless grapes for a number of years. The UK has already received limited supplies of Midnight Beauty grapes from Sun World's production in the US. In addition, Sun World will also target Germany, Holland, France, Italy, and Scandinavia. "In particular, I think there will be strong

David Marguleas (inset) forecasts good potential for Sun World's Midnight Beauty

demand from Holland and Germany due to the unusual size of Midnight Beauty and the demand in both countries for seedless black grapes," Mr Marguleas told Eurofruit Magazine.

As well as Chile and South Africa, Sun World's Egyptian Toshka project will also service the European markets. The first grapevines are scheduled to be planted next year and the first fruit will be available during the 2004 season. "Eventually, we hope to introduce Sun World's proprietary varieties but we will begin with Thompson Seedless and Flame Seedless," Mr Marguleas said.

Sun World claims that demand for Sun World's proprietary grape, Sugraone, which is marketed under the Superior Seedless brand, is growing in Europe. The UK, which is a vital market for seedless grape producers, is already a keen taker of this cultivar and Germany, Holland and Scandinavia are also increasing their consumption of Sugraone, Mr Marguleas claimed. "However, the rise in these other markets is not at the expense of the UK market," he stressed. Earlier this year Sun World shipped samples of its newer grape cultivars to the UK supermarkets. "We received a very favourable response and we anticipate shipping to other European retailers in the near future," Mr. Marguleas told Eurofruit Magazine. "We are charting our course in Europe and tailoring our varieties and production to demand in the region. We are simply planning for the future."

Sun World's strategy to form a 'production matrix', offering grapes year-round was accelerated by its recent announcement to enter into nursery agreements with two companies in Chile and one in Australia. In September, Sun World entered into a nursery agreement with the Chilean firms Agricola Brown and Consorcio Viceroy Delicieux Chile (CV Chile). Under the agreement, Agricola Brown and CV Chile will co-manage Sun World's proprietary table grape, plum, peach, apricot and nectarine varieties within Chile. The US producer has sent a range of fruit varieties to Chile, some of which are available for grower evaluation and production while others will come on line in the next one or two years. "Chilean exports are well respected in the industry and their quantity is increasing annually," Mr Marguleas said. "The parties we have selected are well positioned to provide Sun World with a direct link to some of the best Chilean table grape and stonefruit producers."

Elsewhere, Sun World has appointed the Australian Nurserymen's Fruit Improvement Company (ANFIC) to introduce and promote its new fruit varieties to Australia. "Australia is an important fruit producing country, both for its own domestic market and for its proximity to key Asian markets," Mr Marguleas noted.

ANFIC will manage the imports, evaluation and marketing of Sun World's table grapes, plums, peaches, nectarines and apricots. Sun World has sent around 60 new fruit varieties to Australia for ANFIC's evaluation and some grape varieties are expected to enter commercial production in the next 4-5 years.