

Good news for NZ produce in Europe



in the coming five years, as fresh-cut and frozen fruit and vegetables gain market share from the whole fresh and preserved categories due to their 'value' proposition.

Growth in European consumption of 'non staple' fruits represents good news for New Zealand brand kiwifruit and apples.

stagnant levels over recent years.

"Another high growth category is avocados; this is a global phenomenon, just like berries."

In contrast, Ms van Rijswijk says, 'staple' fruits and fresh vegetables are expected to show stable and, in some cases, declining growth

EUROPEAN CONSUMPTION growth of 'non-staple' fruits like kiwifruit and branded premium apples represent good news for New Zealand's horticulture sector, says Cindy van Rijswijk

"Indeed, out of all the countries, NZ is positioned to benefit from this,"

Ms van Rijswijk says. NZ has a good reputation for high-quality fruit, efficient growers and strong exporters."

This trend to premium products has also helped particularly strong growth

in the berry sector (fresh and frozen), van Rijswijk says. Significant growth is foreseen over the next five years.

The health attributes of berries and their versatility as an ingredient in smoothies and dairy products is also behind the upswing in demand, she says.

"We are also forecasting a revival in the demand for stone fruit," she says, driven by investment in new varieties, which is expected to ramp up demand for plums and peaches from fairly

ASIAN OPPORTUNITIES

CINDY VAN RIJSWICK says while demand from Asia for fruit and vegetables is increasing, Europe is not expected to become a significant supplier into the Asian market. The opportunities in Asia for NZ horticulture however, are very good.

"The misfit between European varieties grown, on the one hand, and consumer preferences in Asia, on the other, is proving to be an impediment for European fruit and vegetable exports into Asia," van Rijswijk says. "For example, the apples grown in northern European countries are not the super sweet and very colourful ones preferred by Asian consumers."

"In addition, the culture of doing business and the fact that governments in Asia have not granted access to certain European fruits from certain countries are also obstacles. Trials in exporting apples, pears and bell peppers have not resulted in large export volumes yet."

Given NZ's proximity to Asia however, it could certainly be a growing market for the NZ horticultural sector to tap into, she says.

"NZ is well positioned to tap into the Asian market. NZ exporters have been able to diversify their exports over a large number of countries in Europe, which makes them very resilient. Resilience and robustness are becoming increasingly important with the uncertainty and volatility we see globally. High dependence on only one market is risky in today's fickle global geopolitical and economic climate."

Ms van Rijswijk says she does not foresee Europe and NZ becoming fierce competitors in fresh fruit and vegetable export markets; however the frozen and processed market will remain competitive. "Especially for frozen processed potatoes, which is Europe's second largest fruit and vegetable export product," she says.