

The cocktail  
tomato with all the  
right traits



“Rijk Zwaan has  
an impressive network  
of specialists”



“Sweet Palermo has  
got a lot of potential in  
the retail market”



# Chainmail

Rijk Zwaan Magazine  
for chain partners | June 2018



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# Chainmail



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## Within grabbing distance

At a time in which we can produce vegetables worldwide under almost any conditions and we are making them available to consumers both offline and increasingly online, you could be forgiven for expecting vegetable consumption to really take off. Unfortunately, the reality is more complex.

At Rijk Zwaan we are continually striving to make our vegetable varieties more appealing, more flavoursome and easier to work with, and health aspects are becoming an ever-bigger priority. We work closely with producers and retailers, including at our Retail Center in Berlin, to explore how we can entice the increasingly unpredictable consumer to eat more oh-so-tasty, varied and healthy vegetables. Trend studies, consumer research, tasting panels and the use of our Love My Salad social media platform give us a good idea of consumers’ wants, needs and taste preferences. That information is not only important for our own R&D activities, but is also extremely relevant for our chain partners. However, we should bear in mind that we specifically ask these consumers about their opinions on and expectations of vegetables, and which vegetables they would and/or would not buy. This means that we have insufficient knowledge about what those same consumers do when they can choose between vegetables and other enticing products – and those products are our real competitors: unhealthy snacks, crisps, chocolate, pizzas, meat and other processed food, irrespective of whether they have been given a ‘light’ label to create an illusion of goodness. It seems as if times of economic prosperity actually put vegetable consumption under greater pressure.

It has been said many times before: we need to redefine the boundaries and work together in order to compete with food manufacturers’ huge marketing budgets. Despite being extremely keen to do so at Rijk Zwaan, it remains difficult to find enough relevant partners. A smarter approach is needed. In view of the ongoing individualisation of society, we might eventually see the arrival of personalised food – but until then, we can reach a substantial number of consumers ourselves by investing in role models and using social media intelligently. As for the easiest step to take, you can start by putting tasty vegetables within grabbing distance, at home or at work – so not in the fridge and not in the fruit bowl, but as a kind of ‘candy jar’ for vegetables. This opens up new opportunities for the whole chain. Be my guest!

Happy reading!

**Marco van Leeuwen**  
Managing Director Rijk Zwaan





# The cocktail tomato with all the right traits

The cocktail tomato has gained a firm foothold in the tomato category in numerous markets over the years. Consumers rely on this tasty truss tomato with an excellent price-quality ratio as the ‘best deal’ for all types of salads. Rijk Zwaan has secured a good position in the cocktail segment thanks to Briosso RZ, because the variety offers precisely what growers and retailers are looking for, explains Marketing Specialist Johan Vis.

“Briosso RZ provides certainty. It’s a flavoursome, aromatic variety with a good yield throughout the whole year thanks to its high truss productivity, including under artificial lighting. The nice, flat trusses make it easy to pack. This dependable variety enables high-tech growers to offer their customers supply reliability. For retailers, the consistently high quality all year round makes the cocktail tomato a must in their fresh produce assortment. They don’t want to disappoint consumers with out of stocks. This variety has been meeting all those expectations for years; that’s its key strength.”

## Two breeding aims

“Our breeders are continuously looking for new toppers like Briosso RZ. The tomato category is mature and hence very crowded. Any new variety must be distinctly better than a market’s current reference

variety. For each commodity within the tomato category we’re seeking the best variety that offers certainty and high profitability – that’s our primary aim. The second breeding aim is to develop premium products: tomato varieties that stand out by visibly excelling in terms of taste or experience.”

## Right positioning

“In both cases, collaboration with partners is the key to success. The right retail positioning depends on a number of aspects coming together; the intrinsic strength of the variety must match the kilo price, the relative price compared with other tomatoes and the packaging. The product can be a success if all those factors are in balance. To achieve this, it’s extremely important to exchange knowledge, experience and – increasingly – data.” •



## Prominent and Love My Salad inspire German bloggers with versatile tomato

**Prominent, the Dutch growers’ association whose motto is ‘Success through partnership’, has been an innovative tomato specialist for almost 25 years. With 30 growers producing tomatoes on 380 hectares, the association supplies top-quality tomatoes all year round, mainly to the German retail channel. For the production of cocktail tomatoes, the growers have been working with Briosso RZ for years, but the collaboration with Rijk Zwaan extends further than that variety alone, explains Wim van den Berg, Marketing Manager at Prominent.**

“The cocktail tomato is a strong product in the tomato category because it offers value for money. It’s one of the 13 segments that Prominent supplies all year round, in addition to other truss tomatoes and snack tomatoes. There is a lot of diversity in the tomato category, and breeding has played a role in that. Varieties such as Cappricia RZ and Briosso RZ have facilitated sales growth throughout the whole of Europe. When is a variety ‘good’? When it’s a valuable product for each and every link in the chain. It must be a stable crop, generate a big enough yield and be well-suited to lit production. The colour and appearance are very important for retailers, while consumers are looking for an aromatic flavour and the right size, because a cocktail tomato is a perfect salad ingredient. Briosso RZ has all that and more, which is why the variety has a long product life cycle.”

## Sharing knowledge

“To maintain our strong position in this competitive market, we continually monitor the preferences of growers, retailers and consumers. We can’t afford to just trust our instincts; quantitative and qualitative data must be leading. If the preferences change, we respond accordingly. We’re gathering ever-more data and sharing knowledge with Rijk Zwaan.

We have a long-standing relationship that goes beyond just choosing varieties. At Rijk Zwaan’s Retail Center in Berlin, for example, we’ve organised sessions for Prominent growers about the German retail sector, the positioning of Briosso RZ and consumer choices. The Retail Center is an excellent place to take a step back from the product and look at the category as a whole. And we’re not looking for market niches, but rather for future volumes.”

## Tomato event for bloggers

“We do other things together too. In June last year, we collaborated with Love My Salad – Rijk Zwaan’s social salad network – to organise a tomato event in Rotterdam for food bloggers, and the cocktail tomato played a key role. We invited food bloggers from Germany and Austria, and Prominent growers talked very passionately about their own experiences in sustainable tomato production. In fact, we should make more use of that kind of ‘storytelling’. We let the bloggers taste the tomatoes for themselves – even the crown. We asked them, ‘What can you really taste?’ A chef ran an inspiring tomato workshop and demonstrated all kinds of ways to prepare and use the product. We hope that these and other activities will further boost the popularity of this versatile tomato.” •



# Collaboration creates ‘truss-worthy’ campaign to promote tomatoes



Rijk Zwaan’s social initiative Love My Salad joined forces with Nutritionist Catherine Saxelby and Dietitian Emma Stirling to support the new education campaign for truss tomatoes ‘Glasshouse Good’.

Driven by leading Australian truss tomato producers: Costa, Flavorite and Perfection Fresh, Glasshouse Good aims to engage, excite and educate consumers about truss tomatoes.

To bring Glasshouse Good to life, events took place in Sydney and Melbourne in November last year which enabled consumers to see tomatoes growing a mini glasshouse, speak to growers and taste samples of delicious truss tomatoes.

In Australia, Rijk Zwaan is one of the market leaders in the glasshouse sector and many of their varieties in cherry, snacking, cocktail and large truss tomatoes are grown throughout the country. With shared goals of increasing vegetable consumption, it was natural for the campaign to seek Rijk Zwaan’s involvement.

Chain Manager and Love My Salad representative, Frances Tolson, led a salad demonstration and talked about the nutrition of tomatoes with Catherine in Sydney and with Emma in Melbourne. Love My Salad’s tomato character, ‘Trusty Trev’ helped the team engage the public.

Australian Truss Tomato representative, Kylie McKnight said: “Love my Salad provided valuable assistance to the campaign from allowing Australia Truss Tomatoes to promote our campaign across the Love my Salad website and social platforms to helping us activate at our live sites. From support through Love my Salad on our category campaigns to working with Rijk Zwaan on varietal development, the partnership is very important in achieving our common goal of increasing awareness of glasshouse grown tomatoes and providing consumers with the best tasting tomatoes.” •



Scan the QR code  
and watch the  
campaign video.





The largest North American small-tomato producer, NatureSweet

“What sets us apart from competitors is that we believe in the power of people”

Soy un Aliado  
Poderoso  
I am Powerful Partner



“Consumers can recognise the NatureSweet® brand immediately, even if they are several metres away from our products”



NatureSweet, the largest small-tomato producer in North America, puts its 9,000 associates first. Another important success factor of this company from San Antonio, Texas, is the taste of its tomatoes.

Alberto Medina Mora, Senior Director Development

& Innovation at NatureSweet, shares his thoughts on the partnership with Rijk Zwaan.

#### What is your company vision?

“NatureSweet is market leader in our business. Our vision is that we want to transform the lives of our associates, such as by investing in their communities and with programmes to support them in study, training and career development, for example. Sure, our seeds are the best, our facilities are state-of-the-art and our methods are truly groundbreaking. But what really sets us apart from competitors are our amazing associates. We truly believe in the power of people. We share this philosophy, and these values, with seed company Rijk Zwaan. That’s why our partnership is so strong.”

#### Can you describe what that partnership means to you?

“The relationship is much more than just a contractor’s one. It is based on trust. Years ago, Rijk Zwaan was the first seed company that involved us in the breeding of varieties at an early stage. Rijk Zwaan breeders visited us at NatureSweet to understand our needs for new tomato varieties. That was a novelty back then. Nowadays our relationship is even stronger. Our associates have fantastic interaction on many different levels, such as breeding, research, product development, commerce, production and logistics. Over the past few years we’ve successfully launched several Rijk Zwaan varieties, so the seed company clearly contributes to achieving our objectives. In fact,

Rijk Zwaan received an award from us in March in recognition of how important this partnership is to us.”

#### What are the most significant factors when choosing a tomato variety?

“Taste is for sure our number-one factor. The second significant factor is what we call ‘growing-friendly’ varieties that have strong resistances against diseases. And of course productivity is the third important trait for a tomato variety. All these factors combine to make a great variety. And if we put them all together with our NatureSweet associates’ expertise in growing and marketing, we have a great recipe for success.”

#### Can you tell us more about the NatureSweet marketing approach?

“The focus is on delivering the best-tasting small tomatoes to consumers in North America. Our associates grow tomatoes on 650 hectares of plastic and glass greenhouses in Mexico and the United States. Under our NatureSweet® brand we pack and sell the high-value tomatoes in very special, premium packaging which is a key factor to our good brand awareness in North America. Consumers can recognise the NatureSweet brand immediately, even if they are several metres away from our products. Our tomatoes Glorys, SunBursts, Cherubs, Jubilees, Eclipses and Constellation are available in most of the major grocery stores in the United States, Canada and Mexico.”

#### What are the main developments in the vegetable category?

“We’re seeing the organic segment increase year after year, which is why we started moving into the organic market two years ago. We believe that we will become a leader in this category in North America – not only in small tomatoes, but also in larger tomatoes, sweet bell peppers, mini-sweet peppers and cucumbers. With Brighthouse Organics™ we’ve developed a strong brand in this category with good brand recognition. Another development is the growing consumer focus on health. Vegetables are so nutritious that we expect them to become increasingly important in the future. Rijk Zwaan can definitely play a role in the opportunities we see in the vegetable market.” •

“We share values with Rijk Zwaan. That’s why our partnership is so strong”





## Gerard Verweij from Levarht on the Trovanzo RZ large truss tomato

“A good match between consumer and product”



**An upgraded value line – that’s the new retail positioning of Trovanzo RZ. With its intense red colour, better flavour and stable year-round production, this variety is a cut above the existing more basic large truss tomatoes. It offers high-end retailers the chance to set themselves apart from the discounters, says Gerard Verweij, Sales Manager for German-speaking countries at Levarht, based in the Dutch village of De Kwakel.**

“Our slogan is ‘bringing the best together’. As a global player in fruit and vegetables we strive to offer our customers the best products from the best growers. It’s all based on partnerships: with our customers, our network of growers and Rijk Zwaan. The Trovanzo RZ pilot project is a good example of successful chain collaboration. German customers in the high-end segment are seeking ways to reposition the tomato category, so we joined forces with Rijk Zwaan to look for a better-class truss tomato.”

### Win-win

“Most supermarkets sell large truss tomatoes as part of their cheap value line, but a high-end supermarket wants to create differentiation based on product range and quality rather than price alone. Trovanzo RZ enables us to offer those retailers a variety that fits into their basic line; it still offers value for money, but looks more attractive, is selected a little more carefully and tastes better. This upgrade results in a better match between the end consumer and the product. Needless to say, every supermarket wants to encourage more repeat purchases. That creates a win-win situation for the whole chain: the customer, Levarht, our growers and Rijk Zwaan.” •

## Two high-potential truss tomatoes

**Various growers have gained experience with the large truss tomato Trovanzo RZ and the medium-sized truss Tomicia RZ. Crop Advisor John Verbruggen explains the strengths of these two varieties.**

“Trovanzo RZ – which used to be known as 72-762 RZ – is a high-quality large truss tomato with a more intense red colour and a slightly above-average Brix value. The fruit weight is between 140 and 160 grams. It compares well with the most productive varieties; it starts producing a week earlier and its yield is more stable throughout the year. This is a generative variety with good continuous growth that is easy to cultivate

both with and without artificial lighting. This year, Trovanzo RZ is being grown by various companies in the Netherlands and Belgium.”

“Tomicia RZ is a medium-sized truss tomato that comes close to rivalling the production levels of large truss tomatoes. The fruit weight is between 125 and 140 grams. It has a better flavour than larger truss tomatoes,

and its key benefits include a good shelf life and attractive green parts.

For the large majority of the year, growers can cut this truss tomato at six fruits for retail packs with maximum visual appeal. This generative crop is performing well for growers too, both with and without artificial lighting. Various companies are producing this variety, mainly in the Netherlands and Switzerland. Tomicia RZ is interesting for retailers/markets with a stronger focus on quality.” •



“Shape, colour and flavour set Operino RZ apart”

**The orange, pear-shaped mini tomato Operino RZ will once again be sold by German retailers Rewe and Globus this season. Valstar, a specialist in greenhouse vegetables based in Poeldijk, the Netherlands, promoted this innovation to its customers last year. Here, the company’s Trade Marketeer Henny van de Wetering explains why.**

“We first saw this tomato two years ago at the Trial Center Tomato. Valstar collaborates intensively with Rijk Zwaan, because we’re keen to spot innovations at an early stage and translate them into market opportunities. That enables us to inspire our customers and offer them unique products in addition to commodities. We like to live up to our motto of ‘Vitality in Vegetables’.”

### Aligned with snack trend

“A mini tomato like Operino RZ is a good fit for us. It stands out thanks to being pear-

shaped, especially in combination with its orange colour and fresh taste that isn’t overly sweet. Customer feedback has been positive because it is well aligned with the snack trend. Last year Operino RZ was available through the retail channel for the first time in two different ways: sold loose with the pick & mix tomatoes, and pre-packed in 250 gram trays. Sales went well, although the volumes are still only small. The future varieties are set to bring further improvements in terms of flavour, colour and shelf life, so we have every confidence that this segment will grow.”

### Actively connecting

“Both of the German retail customers will be listing Operino RZ again this season. We’ve been in contact with both Rijk Zwaan and the growers so we can guarantee the consistent quality that is expected of a premium product. At Valstar, we actively seek to connect with all those links in the chain. This mini tomato has real market potential, and together we can develop it into something big.” •





# Operino RZ on British supermarket shelves as Tre Colori Pomodoro

This year, the orange, pear-shaped Operino RZ tomato will once again be available in the UK through retailer Marks and Spencer. Thanks to its unique appearance, it is a perfect fit in the colourful medley of three snack tomatoes sold under the Tre Colori Pomodoro name. The British grower Thanet Earth was happy to be able to offer this novelty to its customer, explains Technical Manager Nicola Curtis.

Thanet Earth is the UK's newest and largest greenhouse development, where tomatoes are grown and packed all year round and cucumbers and peppers are produced almost continually too. Close to a quarter of all the tomatoes grown in the UK come from this facility's six high-tech greenhouses. Thanet Earth not only strives to minimise its carbon footprint, but the company is also a pioneer in innovative production techniques. In that context, it values the good collaboration with Rijk Zwaan, says Curtis: "Rijk Zwaan has innovative ideas which suit the creativity of our customers."



Furthermore, the family-owned company has excellent seed credentials."

### Leaders in innovation

Operino RZ is an innovative variety that meets everyone's needs, according to the technical manager: "After trialling it in our commercial environment we were

happy to offer this unique tomato to our customer. It showed the quality and values we would expect. Marks and Spencer offers a top tier range and is a leader in innovation. Its customers trust the retailer's selection of

new products. With its shape, colour and full flavour, Operino RZ ticks all the boxes."

### Popular with customers

Marks and Spencer listed Operino RZ for the first time last year. "The packaging is an original design to promote the colourful selection of the three individual varieties. Following last year's successful sales and thanks to popular demand from customers, it will be in the stores again this summer. In fact, there will be 200 more stores selling the product this year. Although it is currently within a mixed selection, Operino RZ definitely has the potential to stand within its own individual line," concludes Curtis. •



# Orange Lorabella Blossom® is a welcome change in the sea of red tomatoes

In North America, Village Farms is one of the largest producers of premium-quality tomatoes, peppers and cucumbers. Under the name Heavenly Villagio Marzano®, the company achieved resounding success with the Idolini RZ red mini plum tomato. Last year, this pioneering grower introduced Farbini RZ under the Lorabella Blossom® name. In fact, this unique orange variety won an innovation award, explains Helen Aquino, Director of Brand Marketing & Communication.



"Village Farms owns and operates six greenhouse facilities in North America amounting to a total of 215 acres, and we partner with companies in Canada and Mexico for an additional 50 acres. Our mission is to continually offer unique varieties that deliver on flavour and provide high-yielding fruit back to our growers. We regularly get positive consumer feedback. They tell us that our tomatoes have that 'garden-fresh' flavour that reminds them of their childhood. We seek varieties that still taste great even when environmental growing conditions and post-harvest conditions vary. Besides that, millennials – an important and growing consumer segment in North America – are looking for versatility in the tomatoes they buy."

### Unique varieties

"Those are the kinds of unique varieties that we want to offer our retail customers, and

our seed supplier relationships are pivotal in that. Rijk Zwaan has been at the forefront of collaboration with Village Farms for many years. The breeding company has helped us to achieve company-wide goals by offering us varieties that are not only a cut above the rest, but also provide crucial supply chain benefits such as shelf-life dependability and flavour profiles, ensuring repeat purchases with consistent returns for our customers. Our flagship exclusive variety, the Heavenly Villagio Marzano tomato, is a great example of this. At the time of launching it was a total market disruptor. Rijk Zwaan's Farbini RZ follows on from that perfectly."

### Intriguing

"The intense colour, shape and texture of this small orange tomato that we market as Lorabella Blossom were all intriguing to us. It is a welcome addition to

the category among the overwhelming sea of red tomatoes. We started trialling this variety two years ago. We have slowly been ramping up production in Canada and the USA, and we have high hopes for it. Especially since winning a Product Innovation Award at the New York Produce Show in December 2017, Lorabella Blossom has caught the attention of our retail partners. In fact, one retailer has opted to highlight the award-winning status on the packaging and in POS material.

Customers describe the flavour as 'blooming with a citrus essence reminiscent of apricots, walnuts and honey', hence our tagline 'Blissfully bright'. We are currently offering a limited launch of this variety with selected retail partners." •





## Producer Guangzhou Bobby Agriculture, China



## “Sales of tomato specialties to Chinese consumers are rising, both offline and online”

**In the Chinese city of Guangzhou, the company Guangzhou Bobby Agriculture Tec. Co. Ltd. grows Rijk Zwaan's tomato specialties on 35 hectares. These tomato types are becoming increasingly popular among Chinese consumers. Mr Tommy Qu, chairman of the board at Bobby Agriculture, values the close collaboration with seed company Rijk Zwaan.**

“We grow various tomato types, including mini loose, mini truss, large loose and truss. We have chosen Rijk Zwaan varieties such as Operino RZ, Florantino RZ, Genery RZ, Vacetto RZ, Senserno RZ and Tatami RZ. Their advantages include good flavour, a high brix, a good balance of sweetness and sourness, and an attractive appearance and shape. The demand for these kinds of specialties has been rising rapidly in China.”

### Offline and online

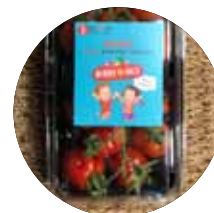
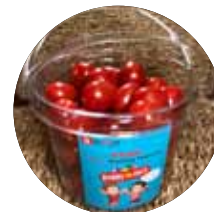
“Bobby's tomato products are also much appreciated by our online and offline business partners. We have differentiated

our market strategy for these two markets. For the offline business we are working with major traditional high-end retailers, such as Carrefour, Walmart, Lotus and Ole', covering 200 stores in southern and south-eastern China. For the online business we have just started collaborating with JD.com, a top online business company, in April this year. The online business will cover Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen and Guangzhou.”

### Knowledge, network and services

“We highly value our close collaboration with the Rijk Zwaan team. What sets them apart

is their chain knowledge, network and services. The whole team continuously help and support us. We benefit from their knowledge of category management, which helps us to position our products and improve operational efficiency. But even more important is the broad business network that Rijk Zwaan have connected us with; this rapidly boosted our sales revenues in the short term and we expect to see a further steady rise in the long run. In the future, we are keen to collaborate even more closely with Rijk Zwaan, such as by doing earlier trials of the new varieties.” •



**International market knowledge is extremely valuable for greenhouse investors**

## “Rijk Zwaan has an impressive network of specialists”

Governments and major investors are taking an interest in the greenhouse sector as a way of securing a supply of healthy and fresh food for the growing world population. That is a logical development, since greenhouses are one of the most efficient and sustainable methods of producing high-quality food. Rijk Zwaan can make an important contribution to large-scale horticultural projects and the company's international network is extremely valuable, according to Jan-Willem Cirkel, who has been Account Manager Horticultural Projects since May 2017.

Consumers are increasingly prepared to pay more for varied, healthy and safe food, and this is making the production of food crops an interesting investment proposition for businesses. “We're seeing a growing number of new entrants from outside the industry, often stimulated by government subsidies and tax breaks in countries such as Russia, the Middle East and China. Nations are also keen to develop a self-sufficient food supply rather than relying on foreign imports. The trend is ‘local for local,’” says Cirkel.

### Early involvement

Investors usually focus on a greenhouse construction company first. Sometimes it is unclear which crops should be grown, and which customers they will be sold to. That's when Rijk Zwaan becomes involved, says the Account Manager Horticultural Projects: “Thanks to our 30 subsidiaries we have a worldwide network, so companies often approach us for advice. Ideally, we like to become involved in the discussions before the greenhouse is completed. Our

local crop specialists and chain specialists have unrivalled knowledge of the optimal growing conditions and the potential market opportunities.”

### Impressive network

One person who has experienced the added value of this network for herself is Russian entrepreneur Tatiana Ovsyankina, who founded a vegetable processing company in Russia. “As the market leader in lettuce, Rijk Zwaan has a good overview of the market and an impressive network of specialists. The local Rijk Zwaan specialist helped us to choose our assortment based on local market information.”

Dutch trader Levarht is another company that made grateful use of Rijk Zwaan's market knowledge when setting up a new company in China. Commercial Director Claas van Os: “In conjunction with our partners HongFu Agriculture and Rijk Zwaan, we successfully entered the Chinese market with Cappricia RZ. We built a high-tech greenhouse and set up the sales activities together. We're now supplying

those tomatoes to more than 15 supermarkets in China.”

### Consortium of convenience

In addition to its interesting network in the local market, Rijk Zwaan's good contact with suppliers to the greenhouse sector also comes in useful. “If an investor approaches us directly, we act as the linking pin. We know all the major greenhouse builders, technology companies, substrate suppliers and lighting specialists, with whom we form a ‘consortium of convenience’ – in other words, the optimal combination of companies for each specific project. The quickest way for an investor to recoup their investment is to design a greenhouse for a crop that is in high demand.”

The service doesn't stop once the crop has been selected, the greenhouse has been built and the market has been analysed; Rijk Zwaan's local specialists also provide technical advice to help the growers get the best out of the varieties. Cirkel: “By working together in this way, we and our partners support efficient, healthy and sustainable food production.” •

Keen to know more?  
Contact [j.cirkel@rijkszwaan.nl](mailto:j.cirkel@rijkszwaan.nl)



### What can Rijk Zwaan offer investment partners?

- ✚ An international network of suppliers and market partners
- ✚ Technical advice to get the best out of the varieties
- ✚ Chain management to connect growers with customers
- ✚ Knowledge of local consumer preferences



Collaboration, partnerships and chain management are all popular media topics, with wide coverage of visits to new markets and participation in events. Quick Clicks provides an overview of important or unusual happenings that have attracted media attention.



**Silky Pink on the road**  
Malaysia has a brand new Silky Pink truck driving around!

[Traveller in Asia](#)



**First Cantaloupe melon arrivals in Japan**  
Today me, Arco, German and Fernando visited clients in Japan to see the first arrivals with Cantaloupe (Caribbean Gold from Rijk Zwaan) melons from Guatemala. The quality was above expectations with a brix of 14 ...

[Frank Levahrt on LinkedIn](#)



**Strong kale or tropical onion?**  
How to feed 10 billion people in 2050?

[Volkskrant](#)



**Opening World Horti Center**  
Rijk Zwaan on Twitter @RijkZwaan | Mar 7: Today, Dutch Queen Maxima officially opened @WorldHortiCentr : the global knowledge and innovation center for international greenhouse horticulture. Proud to be a part of it!

[Twitter.com](#)

“In lettuce, mechanical harvesting is a significant trend that is eliminating the need for factory processing.”

Bauke van Lenteren on [rijkzwaan.com/solutions/convenience](#)



**“Rijk Zwaan wins Employer of the Year award”**  
Rijk Zwaan on Twitter @RijkZwaan | Feb 6: Honoured to have received the Best Employer Award for the Netherlands. A big compliment to all our colleagues worldwide working at Rijk Zwaan!

[Twitter.com](#)



**Partner promotes Silky Pink on the frontage**  
Partner LeHe promotes Silky Pink on the frontage of its office in China.

[Traveller in Asia](#)



**Successful Field Days in Tanzania**  
Overwhelming success during first day of our National Field days at Afrisem. Farmers organised by World Vision, SNV, SEVIA, Farm Concern or just on their own kept pouring in. Farmers and the Rijk Zwaan team mingled ...

[Harald Peeters on LinkedIn](#)



**Rijk Zwaan Retail Center opens for 2nd season**  
Rijk Zwaan on Twitter @RijkZwaan | Feb 5: Our Retail Center in Berlin opens for its second season; the place to discuss market needs and customised solutions.

[Twitter.com](#)

# Quick Clicks



**Rijk Zwaan at RAMA**  
Jan Doldersum on Twitter @Jan\_Doldersum | Mar 19: Today in Rio to present world wide retail trends and @RijkZwaan chain approach during the RAMA conference about traceability of #ABRAS Brazilian Retail Association. #innovation #foodsafety #lesswaste #partnership

[Twitter.com](#)



**Introducing Beach melons at PMA Fresh Summit**  
Rijk Zwaan USA on Twitter @RijkZwaanUSA | Oct 20: Come taste the summer! Cayucos Beach RZ #pmafreshshowcase

[Twitter.com](#)



**Open Day at Trial Center Leamington**  
Great interest in new varieties during open day Rijk Zwaan Canada

[Hortidaily](#)



**Knox™ in South Africa**  
Rijk Zwaan introduces Knox lettuce varieties to South African growers

[Freshplaza.com](#)

“Our breeders pay close attention to the organic qualities of each variety.”

Heleen Bos on [rijkzwaan.com/solutions/organic](#)



**Knox™ promoted at Asia Fruit Logistica**  
Bauke van Lenteren on Twitter @baukx | Sep 6: Having a Great time #AFL2017 with @Jan\_Doldersum @JWernerRZ @WiseguyJPB @RijkZwaan @KnoxtmLettuce @SalanovaLettuce

[Twitter.com](#)



**New Salanova packaging inspiration**  
Elisabet Exposito on Twitter @ElisabetExp | Mar 1: @SalanovaLettuce new image :)

[Twitter.com](#)



**Lift-off for Rijk Zwaan's rocket**  
Vegetable breeding company adds rocket to its babyleaf assortment under the Rocketeerz label.

[Fruitnet.com](#)



**Rijk Zwaan helps transform vegetable market in Egypt**  
With 92 million people that need to be fed every day, Egypt is a big market offering plenty of opportunities to companies active in the agricultural sector. One such company is Rijk Zwaan.

[Freshplaza.com](#)



## South-African retailer Woolworths

“Our partnership with Rijk Zwaan allows us to be the first to market”

South-African retailer Woolworths is well known for its quality and innovation. The company collaborated with Rijk Zwaan and local growers to launch Crunchita RZ, a crispy cos lettuce, in 2015. That marked the start of a successful and intensive chain partnership, explains Alison Pohl, Technical Manager of Vegetables & Salads.

Woolworths, which is affectionately known as ‘Woolies’ in South Africa, has 400 stores selling fashion, food and beauty products as well as homeware. Shoppers associate Woolworths with quality, style, inspiration and innovation, and that is precisely why the retailer chose to enter into a unique partnership with Rijk Zwaan, says the Technical Manager: “That collaboration has been instrumental in allowing us to offer our customers new and exciting quality products. Our exclusivity agreements with Rijk Zwaan allow us to be the first to market with unusual vegetables in South Africa.”

### Analysing growth

The collaboration started with Crunchita RZ, the crispy cos lettuce. “Rijk Zwaan approached us a couple of years ago and offered to analyse Woolworths’ lettuce category. We subsequently worked with Rijk Zwaan and growers to successfully launch the new lettuce, which is sold in stores under its own name. It was the very first chain collaboration project of its kind in South Africa,” comments Pohl. It opened up a world of new opportunities. Rijk Zwaan specialists analysed category growth for other fresh vegetables and advised the retailer on how the chain could help to streamline and innovate the product offering. Since then, a whole host of new products have been trialled or listed, including Tricolore mini bell peppers, Florantino RZ and Solarino RZ mini plum tomatoes, and more new lettuce varieties.

### Sharing knowledge

Alison Pohl regards the partnership as a win-win situation. “Rijk Zwaan has supported our teams in many ways, from advising on world trends to sharing knowledge and assisting our farmers with technical support. Within Woolworths, planning, procurement, product development, sales and technical all work closely together with growers and also Rijk Zwaan to determine the optimal grower programme. Our joint collaboration is creating business growth for all the links in the chain.” •





Campaign closely aligns online and offline activities

# Salanova® Surprise captures consumer emotions

Salanova® won Fruit Logistica's first-ever Innovation Award 12 years ago, and nowadays the tasty one-cut, ready lettuce is sold by retailers worldwide. With the new Salanova Surprise online and offline campaign, Rijk Zwaan is aiming to further boost this lettuce. Bauke van Lenteren, Marketing Specialist Leafies, encourages chain partners to use the campaign for their own purposes.



"Surprise followed by delight – that's what consumers feel when they're preparing Salanova lettuce. First, they're surprised by how easy the 'one cut, ready' principle is and the large number of leaves, and then they are delighted by how great the end result looks. We've captured those emotions in a stop-motion video in a mix of pictures of people's faces and images of the perfect lettuce leaves. The tagline is 'All about the leaves.'"

## Boosting the lettuce category

"We actually had two main reasons for developing this campaign. Firstly, we want to boost the lettuce category. Salanova is already sold through higher-end supermarkets in Europe, South America and Asia. One of the most successful types is the beautiful red butterhead lettuce, which looks like a flower. That can really invigorate every retailer's lettuce offering, which is currently mainly green and crispy. Our campaign is not only targeted at existing partnerships, but we're also keen to set up new chain projects."

## Activating online fans

"The second reason is that Salanova has lots of online fans; food bloggers share images of terrific creations made using our lettuce through social media channels such as Instagram and Facebook. We want to make even better use of that free publicity in the future.

The Salanova website homepage now displays the



photos bloggers post with #salanovalettuce. We're keen to activate their followers, which is why 'where to buy' is the most important link on the website."

## Complete toolkit

"Salanova Surprise has three objectives: to increase brand awareness, to activate consumers and then to build consumer loyalty. Online and offline activities are perfectly aligned. The campaign comprises a complete toolkit including the video, the website [www.salanova.com](http://www.salanova.com) in eight languages, recipe cards, 'one cut, ready cards' and the special lettuce cutter."

## Co-branding

"We encourage all our existing and new chain partners to use the Salanova Surprise campaign for their own promotional purposes, whether as co-branding or under private label, whichever they prefer. We achieve the biggest effect when we take a very targeted, joint approach: Rijk Zwaan, local growers and the retailer. Grocery chains are already starting to roll out the campaign in the UK." •



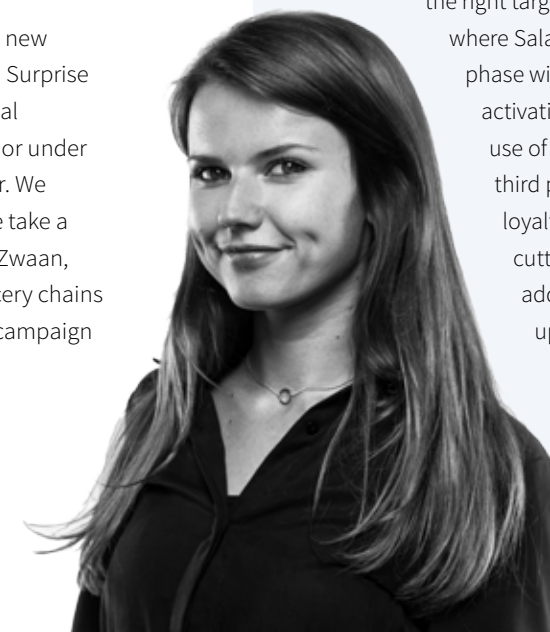
## 'We're making very targeted use of online channels'

**A 32-year-old English amateur cook from London watches the Salanova Surprise video on Facebook twice in May. That's interesting, she thinks. When she subsequently comes across that very same appealing lettuce in her local supermarket, she buys it – plus she's happy to submit her email address online for a chance to win a Salanova cutter.**

That's what the Rotterdam-based internet agency Hoppering – which has helped to set up the online campaign – hopes the three-phase online marketing campaign will achieve, according to Online Marketer Laura de Rooij. "We're building the campaign up gradually. Firstly, we're spending a few months working on brand awareness with banners on selected online channels such as Facebook, YouTube and Instagram. Salanova is a terrific product that stirs emotions and is perfect for image-based marketing."

## From activation to loyalty

"We make that selection based on precisely defined target groups combined with information about stockists. With social media you can narrowly target the campaign based on things like age, hobbies and location. This allows us to reach the right target group in the geographical regions where Salanova is sold." The brand awareness phase will be followed by a few months of activation based on films about the practical use of Salanova, such as the cutter. The third phase revolves around building loyalty, says De Rooij: "Things like the cutter competition will generate email addresses. This will enable us to build up a fan base with whom we can share recipes, for example."



Keen to know more about the Salanova Surprise? Scan the QR code and share the details through your own online media.





Better flavour and less waste

# Cayucos Beach combines the best of both worlds

A tasty, juicy and aromatic melon with a longer shelf life – that's the ideal Cantaloupe melon for consumers and retailers in the USA. Rijk Zwaan meets all of those needs with the Beach melon concept. The concept was launched in a summery beach-themed setting during the PMA Fresh Summit in New Orleans in October 2017.

Interest has been growing in Cayucos Beach RZ, one of the first Beach varieties, ever since.

The melon is a much-loved fruit around the world. US consumers are crazy about Cantaloupes, which have light-brown skin and orange flesh. The two available types are Shippers and Harpers. The orange-fleshed Shippers are deliciously juicy and have a rich aroma, explains David Perie, Chain Manager at Rijk Zwaan USA: "However, the fruits have a short shelf life; they need to be consumed within seven days of harvesting. Any longer than that and the quality deteriorates, which means considerable product losses for the retailer." The situation is completely the opposite for Harpers, which can be consumed as long as 21 days after harvesting. But there is a downside to that: Harper melons are firmer, even when ripe, and not very juicy or aromatic. "So consumers are losing faith in Cantaloupes. They are either not flavourful enough or they spoil too quickly after purchase."

## Biggest benefit

Rijk Zwaan hopes that Beach varieties will increase consumer confidence in the product, because the new concept combines the

best of both types. After harvesting, Beach melons have a shelf life of 10 to 15 days, putting them exactly halfway between Shippers and Harpers. That extended shelf life (ESL) reduces product losses in the chain. Furthermore, Cayucos Beach RZ is ideal for harvesting in the USA's major crop-growing regions from early May to mid-October. The biggest benefit is its flavour. Perie: "In two consumer taste tests, with over 200 participants, Cayucos Beach RZ came out on top against Harpers and other ESL varieties. It has a very good, sweet flavour reminiscent of the fresh local summer melons many of us remember from our childhood. Our melon makes people think of sun and summer."

## Melon ice cream

That all makes Beach an extremely fitting name for this concept, which Rijk Zwaan officially launched in style at the PMA Fresh Summit in New Orleans in October 2017. "Our display was one of only three out of over a hundred entries nominated for



Best New Product Promo. We handed out samples of Cayucos Beach RZ, served as a small melon ball atop a mini ice cream cone, and took beach-themed instant photos of visitors posing on a surfboard. This melon really captures that nostalgic sense of summer," says the chain manager enthusiastically.

## Reducing waste

In 2018 the Beach promotional activities are being followed up with frisbees in designed to look like melons. Perie: "This will remind our chain partners that it's almost Beach season again. We have great forecasts and sales will exceed initial expectations. It will take time for growers, traders and retailers to become familiar with Beach, and ESL melons are new to many of them. That's why we will also be letting all our chain partners see, taste and learn more about Beach for themselves at our Melon Open Field Days in Holtville, California, in May 2018. By working together, we can reduce waste while also creating a very positive consumer experience with this high-quality and flavourful melon." •



Gerbert van Egmond, Buying Manager at Levarht

## "With Caribbean we want to offer retailers the same quality and flavour all year round"

According to Levarht, an import and export company based in the Dutch village of De Kwakel, supply chain collaboration is essential for long-term growth. That's why the company maintains short lines of communication with growers, Rijk Zwaan and retailers. Its aim is to provide retailers with a year-round supply of consistently high-quality products, such as Caribbean melons. For customers in the Middle East, some of those melons come from Honduras and some from Brazil, and now – since the start of a pilot project last year – from Turkey too. Gerbert van Egmond from Levarht explains the importance of this pilot.

"Since 1933 our company has grown into a global player in fruit and vegetables, with a strong market position in the Middle East. We have a clear focus: we work with preferred partners and buy direct from the source as much as possible. We're extremely transparent about that. We list all our growers on our website, for example, and they often join us at meetings with our end customers. We work on joint projects together with Rijk Zwaan, which is a company that encourages the same kind of openness. We regularly suggest to supermarket buyers that they should visit the Rijk Zwaan trial station to get some new ideas."

## Caribbean melons from three different countries

"One of our joint projects is to achieve year-round availability of high-quality Cantaloupe melons from the Caribbean range, because retailers in the Middle East want to offer their consumers the same melons throughout the entire year. Our grower in Honduras supplies the Caribbean Gold RZ variety from January until mid-May and our grower in Brazil supplies the same variety from late August until January, but we weren't able to supply from late May until September. I mentioned this to Rijk Zwaan, and then last year, in close consultation, we started a pilot project with a Turkish grower to trial the Caribbean King RZ variety. Turkey has the ideal climate for melon production and also has a favourable position geographically with respect to the Middle East."

## Building knowledge

"This pilot project was necessary to build knowledge about production techniques, the right time to harvest, the post-harvest handling and the logistics. It's not all plain sailing, and it takes time and money. Rijk Zwaan is supporting the grower in acquiring the knowledge. Last year they visited José Lopez – grower of Caribbean melons in Honduras – together, and the Turkish grower also visited our retail customer in the Middle East to see how the melons are displayed in stores. All the activities are focused on being able to supply Caribbean melons with the same quality and flavour all year round, because if consumers know they can depend on that, they will buy the product more often – and that's good for all the chain partners: Rijk Zwaan, the growers, us and the retailer. If this goes well, we expect to be able to offer a year-round supply of Caribbean to other sales markets in the future too." •



## Rijk Zwaan introduces Caribbean melons in Turkey

Turkey is one of the world's biggest producers of melons – which is not surprising, because it has the ideal climate. The local melon type, Kirkagaç, is a particular favourite among consumers, but the more widely known Galia is also sold there. Melons are grown outdoors from May to September.

However, to stimulate the export of this much-loved type of fruit, local growers also need to produce varieties that are popular outside of Turkey. That's why, in close consultation with Levarht, Rijk Zwaan has introduced the Caribbean King RZ variety in Turkey. Just like all the other varieties in the Caribbean range, it has bright orange flesh, a high sugar content and a long shelf life.

Rijk Zwaan established the initial contact between the Turkish grower and the Dutch exporter and is now providing technical advice. If this project is a success, Turkey can further expand its melon export activities to countries such as Russia, Ukraine, the Balkans and the Middle East.





# One-bite is a healthy, convenient alternative when hunger pangs strike



**Now available in a range of sizes and colours, the snack tomato has established itself as a healthy alternative for traditional snacks such as potato crisps and nuts. And it has now been joined by a fresh, crunchy mini cucumber that can be eaten whole. One-bite looks similar to a regular snack cucumber, but is even smaller at just six centimetres in length. This low-calorie, bite-sized snack is a perfect fit in Rijk Zwaan's MyCubies® snack segment.**

More and more cucumber types are arriving on the scene to keep the traditional long, green cucumber company. The Rijk Zwaan MyCubies range already includes green, bicolour and mint-green snack cucumbers of between 8 and 11 centimetres in length, and these have now been joined by the unique One Bite cucumber which is 5 to 6 centimetres long and weighs 8 to 15 grams. The development process took years, according to Crop Coordinator Gert-Jan Krook: "You can't simply harvest a snack cucumber earlier. The plant needs to produce thinner, smaller cucumbers that ripen at the right length to ensure a good shelf life. Our breeders spent a long time searching for those traits. But the result, Quatrino RZ, is a fresh, crunchy mini cucumber that can really rival traditional snacks."



Heleen van Rijn-Wassenaar, Marketing Specialist Cucumber: "There is a real market for the One Bite snack. It was rated as an attractive or very attractive product by 90% of the consumers. Our research also gives our partners insight into possible packaging concepts and pricing levels."

The price is definitely an important factor, because harvesting is a very labour-intensive process, adds Krook: "Mini cucumbers grow quickly, so growers have to check the crop twice a day. They're not used to that, so that's our biggest challenge in terms of the further development of One Bite."

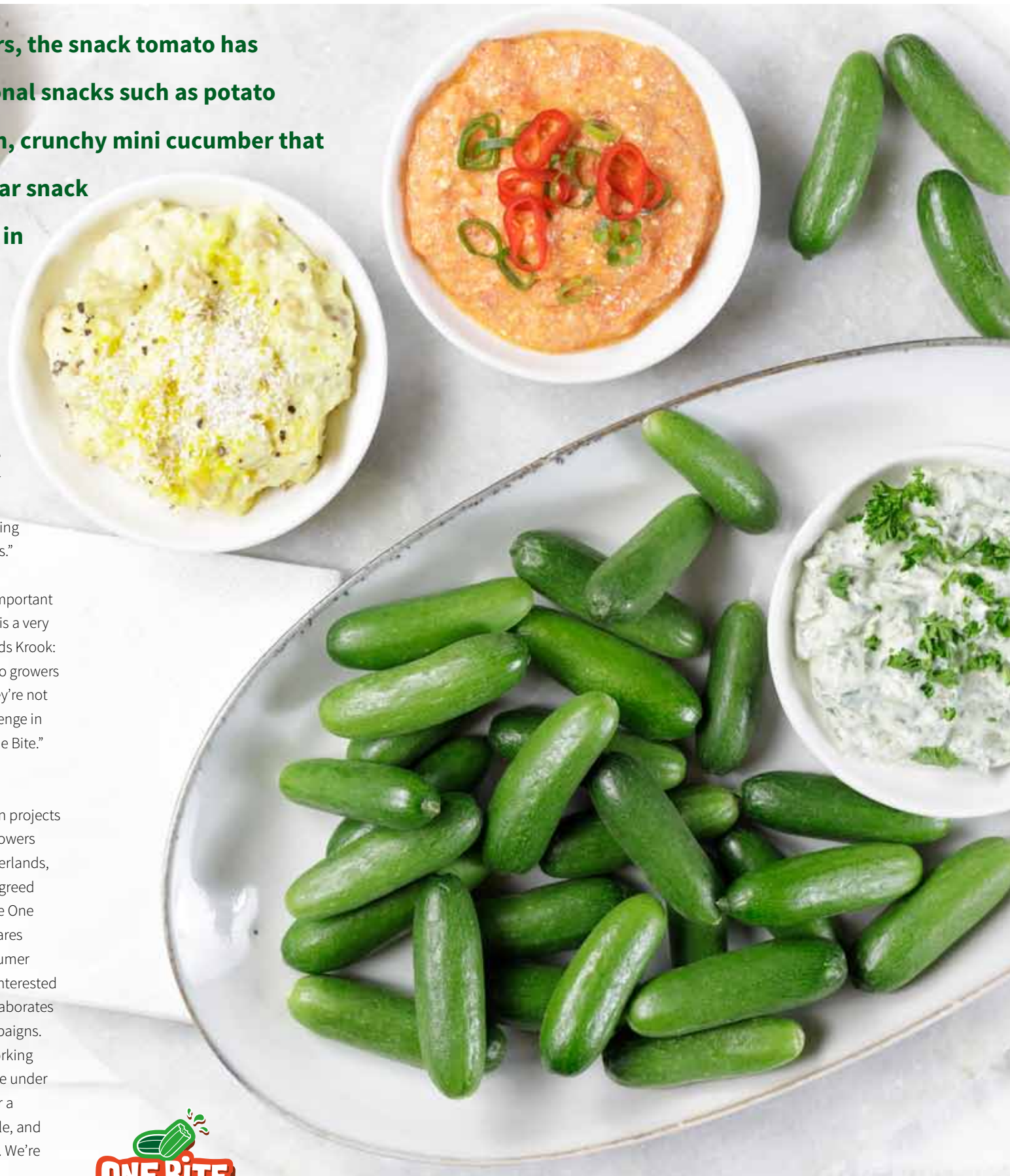
## Co-branding possibilities

In spite of that challenge, the first chain projects are already under way; a number of growers and retailers in Spain, the Netherlands, Australia and Turkey have agreed to produce and market the One Bite snack. Rijk Zwaan shares the findings from its consumer research with potentially interested chain partners and also collaborates with them on promotional campaigns.

Van Rijn: "Retailers that are already working with MyCubies can simply add One Bite under the same label. In other cases, we offer a separate One Bite label in a similar style, and there are co-branding possibilities too. We're happy to discuss the opportunities." •

## Very attractive

And that is precisely how Rijk Zwaan positions One Bite in response to the snack and convenience trend: as a healthy, easy alternative when hunger pangs strike. It is sold either on its own, in a mix with other snack vegetables or as part of fresh-cut salads. It can be eaten immediately, no peeling required. Consumer research conducted by Rijk Zwaan in Germany revealed that 'conscious consumers' are prepared to pay a little extra for a product like this, explains







# The sweet spot in the market

Freshwest, a family owned pepper business based in Glenbrook, New Zealand, has found its place in the market with the sweet pointed pepper, Sweet Palermo.

Owners Gaven and Vanessa Naylor are self-proclaimed 'foodies' and over the past 13 years have trialled many different varieties of peppers with the goal of providing their customers with quality, fresh, flavoursome peppers.

"There are big farms in New Zealand that can dominate the market, so we needed to find a way to be different," Gaven said. "We first trialled Sweet Palermo over 10 years ago and realised straight away that it was something special – it has a unique shape and fantastic taste."

In 2015, Rijk Zwaan launched the Sweet Palermo brand that highlights the special flavour and versatility of the pointed peppers, and features a ready-made marketing concept that growers can tailor to their needs.

## More volume year-round

The campaign coincided with Freshwest dramatically increasing their Palermo RZ plantings to provide more volume and year-round production for the New Zealand domestic market. Freshwest also refreshed its brand, 'King Sweeties', and took the

opportunity to incorporate elements of the Sweet Palermo branding into its design.

## Link social media to [sweetpalermo.com](http://sweetpalermo.com)

"From the beginning we have worked very closely with Rijk Zwaan with regards to growing information to maximise yields," Gaven said. "When Rijk Zwaan introduced the Sweet Palermo promotion this added a lot to our ongoing promotional work. We were able to link our social media with the Sweet Palermo website where our customers can get a range of information from recipes to nutritional information."

Over the past 10 years Freshwest has continued to expand its Sweet Palermo production and is now growing on 8,000m<sup>2</sup>. In 2017, Freshwest's King Sweeties was a finalist in the New Zealand Food Awards for 'Primary Sector Product' and 'Artisan Producer'.





## Pick n Pay, retailer in southern Africa

# “Sweet Palermo has got a lot of potential in the retail market”

**Pick n Pay is one of the biggest retailers in southern Africa, with more than 1,500 stores across seven countries. In close collaboration with grower Graceland Hydroponics, the grocery chain has introduced Sweet Palermo in South Africa. Frikkie van Niekerk, Head of Fresh Development at Pick n Pay, is enthusiastic about this sweet pointed pepper:**

**“It’s a great product with a lot of potential.”**



Frikkie van Niekerk wears eyetracking glasses during his visit to the Retail Center Berlin.

Last year Pick n Pay proudly celebrated its 50th anniversary. Over the past five decades the chain – which started out in South Africa – has become a household name on the African continent. The retailer offers a wide choice of high-quality food and beverages, clothing and many other products at attractive prices, making it popular among consumers – as underlined in late 2017, when customers voted Pick n Pay’s Smart Shopper loyalty scheme as overall winner of the ‘Sunday Times Top Brands Award’.



### Expanded

One of the retail chain’s suppliers is Graceland Hydroponics, a producer with facilities in Silkaatsnek and Kleinfontein. Grower Johan Joubert is specialised in greenhouse-grown cucumbers and peppers, which he produces hydroponically in cocopeat/sawdust. He first saw Sweet Palermo in 2007 when visiting Spain with Rijk Zwaan, with whom he collaborates closely. “The product impressed me so much that I immediately decided to trial it, and since then I’ve expanded it to two hectares of greenhouses. The product is available in Pick n Pay’s stores throughout South Africa.”

### Great product

Frikkie van Niekerk from Pick n Pay is very enthusiastic about this innovation in the pepper segment. “Sweet Palermo is a great product that eats incredibly well. Its long shape and deep colour make it a very attractive pepper that has got a lot of potential in the retail market. We are excited to grow the range within Pick n Pay and offer our customers the best innovations that are out there.”

As Van Niekerk says, Sweet Palermo holds many more possibilities. Johan Joubert sees exciting opportunities if Rijk Zwaan, Pick n Pay and Graceland Hydroponics work together even more closely to promote it. “This is a superior product that can become even more successful supported by good promotional material and new ideas.” •



## Dark-green Faiza RZ bean surprises German consumers



Greentense is one of Rijk Zwaan’s newest concepts. It is based on Faiza RZ, an innovative variety of pole-slicing bean with an attractive dark-green colour and intense flavour. Various customers are already growing Faiza RZ and experiencing the benefits of Greentense for themselves. One such customer is Hans Hornig, a vegetable producer from Heidelberg, Germany.



“Our family-owned company employs 13 people and is based in southern Germany, where the climate is mild. The field crops we produce are cauliflower, corn salad, kohlrabi, various types of lettuce, tomatoes and pole-slicing beans. Some of our crops are grown in tunnels so that we can bring the start of the season forward. We sell our products through the OGA growers’ cooperative; I’m a member of the board. OGA supplies fresh fruit and vegetables to supermarkets throughout the entire southern German region of Baden-Württemberg on a daily basis.”

### Striking dark-green colour

“We grow some of our pole-slicing beans in tunnels so that we can start supplying them from May onwards. The open-field production then continues until October. That aligns well with the season in Morocco, which runs from October until May, so we’re able to offer consumers continuity all year round. In 2015 we started trials with Faiza RZ, in close consultation with

Rijk Zwaan. We have strong ties with them because I often test their new varieties. This pole-slicing bean caught our attention early on, during tunnel production, thanks to its attractive dark-green colour. In open-field production it has proven to be a strong variety under various weather conditions, such as a hot summer. Its ease of harvesting, good yield and fresh appearance are big advantages.”

### Offering something new

“That’s why we switched to Faiza RZ in 2016. This Greentense variety by Rijk Zwaan enables us to offer consumers something new. The appealing colour of this pole-slicing bean is particularly eye-catching. Besides that, another major benefit is of course the fact that the variety is virtually stringless, which makes it very easy to prepare. The intense flavour ensures that consumers will choose to buy this variety time and time again. This striking pole-slicing bean enables us to really surprise our customers.” •





**Heleen Bos, Specialist Organics at Rijk Zwaan**

“Market for organic vegetables is nowhere near saturated”

Organic is still booming. In Europe and the USA, the market grew by 5-8% in 2017, and more and more organic vegetables are making their way onto supermarket shelves on the world's other continents too. Around 40% of all Rijk Zwaan's varieties are suitable for organic production. Some seeds are organically produced, and others are non-chemically treated (NCT). Rijk Zwaan supports partners that want to invest in this segment by providing technical advice and 'matchmaking' in the chain, explains Heleen Bos, Specialist Organics at Rijk Zwaan.

“Organic vegetables have become a serious business and mature market, thanks in part to the millennials (people born between 1980 and 2000). They are 'choosy' consumers who are looking for tasty, healthy and environmentally friendly vegetables, and they are prepared to pay good money for them. The days of maggot-ridden apples are over for good. Today's consumers want truly stand-out quality products that look different.”

#### Discerning consumers

“Growth in organics is also being driven by discerning consumers who want to know where their food comes from. They are mainly concerned about food safety. They choose organic because they don't want any chemicals on their fresh produce. We're not only seeing this trend in developed markets, but also in Latin America, Asia, the Middle East and Africa. The growing middle classes want to be certain that their food is safe to eat, so even supermarkets in countries like Ghana and Peru have a section selling organic products.”

#### No empty shelves

“All retailers are responding to the trend, and in fact they are keen to expand their organic product range because the market is nowhere near saturated yet. However, they can't afford to have empty shelves. Product supply is the

biggest challenge in this growing market, and this offers a great opportunity for growers. It takes two or three years for a grower to switch to organic production, so it's an investment of time and money. At Rijk Zwaan we can help growers both during and after the transition, because we have a team of crop specialists who are experienced in organic production. And that help extends beyond just technical advice; we regularly put organic growers in contact with retailers, because our chain managers know both the market and its companies well.”

#### Ever-improving offering

“Rijk Zwaan has a large organic range; close to half of our total assortment is available for organic production, covering all main greenhouse products, lettuce, spinach and many other crops. Some of our seeds are organically produced and others are non-chemically treated. We strive to further improve our organic offering every year. Varieties must be resistant against diseases and pests, as well as strong and robust, but organic vegetables must also have an excellent flavour and appearance. After all, consumers are critical. They expect tasty products that are also visibly different, such as our striped aubergine Angela RZ, our plum truss tomato Wasino RZ or our Sweet Palermo sweet pointed peppers.”



**NCT**

#### What's the difference between organic and NCT?

At Rijk Zwaan, we supply both organic seed and NCT seed. Our organic seed is produced in line with organic production principles, and we are certified for this process. It means that we run more risks, because we may not use chemicals during the seed production process. To minimise the likelihood of diseases, we grow the organic seeds in special fields and in special greenhouses, and they are processed and packed in a separate area. This entails extra costs, resulting in a higher price than for regular seeds.

NCT stands for 'non-chemically treated'. NCT seeds are produced using conventional methods but do not receive a chemical coating or chemical additives. Whether organic growers are allowed to use NCT seed depends on all kinds of factors, such as the availability of organic seed. The rules vary from one country to another, even within the EU. New legislation is currently being prepared in Brussels aimed at banning the use of non-organic or NCT seed in the production of organic vegetables by 2035. Rijk Zwaan is keeping a close eye on these developments.

#### Laser marking

“It's not only the product itself that has to stand out, but also the packaging. Needless to say, we'd prefer to have biodegradable packaging or none at all, and we're working on some ideas with our partners. Eosta, a Dutch distributor of organic fruit and vegetables, has started laser marking fresh produce. We're testing it on our varieties to determine the effect on shelf life. We regularly set up chain projects for organic produce with Eosta and other partners, with whom we exchange knowledge about our varieties and how they are marketed. We're working to further develop the organic segment together.” •



Rocket fits perfectly in the babyleaf range

# Rijk Zwaan launches range of rocket varieties

**As a major player in the babyleaf segment, for the past decade Rijk Zwaan has been harbouring a desire to add rocket to its already extensive assortment – and that desire has now become reality. Rocket varieties have been available under the Rocketeerz label since the start of 2018. Rijk Zwaan presented the first three varieties – which set themselves apart in terms of innovativeness, disease resistances and harvest reliability – during the Open Field Days in Cartagena, Spain, from 12-17 February 2018.**

Such varieties are in great demand among customers, says Mark Charlesworth, Crop Coordinator at Rijk Zwaan: “The market for this babyleaf crop is growing because the product is perfectly aligned with the convenience trend. Besides that, consumers love its peppery, nutty flavour. But although the rocket market is expanding, the development of new varieties was really lagging



behind.” The market has been dominated for years by companies in Italy, where the origins of rocket lie. Innovation was not a priority for them – but Rijk Zwaan is now changing things with the launch of Rocketeerz.

## Both wild and cultivated types

Each of the varieties under this label has good seed germination strength, extensive mildew resistances, a longer shelf life and an extended growing season. The vegetable breeding company is clearly focusing on providing growers around the world with a broad and reliable assortment. Frank Roelofs, Crop Manager Rocket: “We’re developing both wild and cultivated types. They have different origins; the wild types of the *Diplotaxis* family have the most deeply incised leaves and the most pronounced peppery taste. That’s the common type in Europe. Meanwhile, the real rocket type is called *Eruca*. It’s more rounded and has a milder flavour. This is the standard type in South America. We’re striving to innovate in both types of rocket, to add value for the market.”

## Three varieties available

The first three varieties became available at the beginning of this year, starting with Sinope RZ and Themisto RZ. “These are wild types with incised leaves, a good flavour and extensive resistances, which greatly reduces the need for chemical agents. In response to growers wishes, they can also be tunnel-grown in the winter months in moderate climates,” adds Charlesworth. Rijk Zwaan also offers Sparkle RZ which, as the name suggests, is a dazzlingly good and also innovative variety. Roelofs: “It’s a variety of the *Eruca* type, with the characteristic taste of rocket but spinach-shaped leaves. As a result, it’s visually distinct from other rocket varieties.” All three varieties have been extensively trialled, both by growers and in collaboration with vegetable processing companies.

The range won’t stay limited to this trio of varieties for long. Frank Roelofs and Mark Charlesworth both confirm that chain partners can expect to see more unique varieties added to the Rocketeerz label over the coming years. •



## Rocketeerz label underlines commitment to innovation

**Rijk Zwaan chose to launch its rocket range under the label ‘Rocketeerz’, a name which symbolises the company’s pioneering quest for innovation. Michael Sempf, Marketing Specialist Rocket, explains more about the ambitions.**

“By launching this label, we’re demonstrating our intention to invest heavily in this market in the years ahead; growers, convenience companies, retailers and consumers can all depend on our ongoing commitment. The Rocketeerz name is derived from the name of the crop itself, of course, but above all it’s a light-hearted reference to astronauts on a journey to explore space. There

is still a lot of scope for discovery and innovation within rocket. All the variety names will therefore be linked to space, helping to make them a recognisable part of the programme.”

### Aligned with the convenience trend

“Rijk Zwaan works in close collaboration with chain partners. Rocketeerz is particularly targeted at business partners. Rijk Zwaan can help vegetable

processing companies to integrate the varieties in their own product lines. It’s an interesting market because the demand for pre-packed fresh vegetables is still growing. Consumers regard rocket as a healthy, attractive and convenient salad vegetable. As a bagged product – whether as a mono product or in medleys – it is well aligned with the convenience trend. We conduct ongoing consumer research and there is a clear preference for lettuce types with a fresh, green colour and rounded leaves. We’re responding to that, and we think consumers will be pleasantly surprised by the Rocketeerz varieties.”



## Product Development Manager Hubert Müller on Knox™ Core “Trait welcomed by the fresh market”

Thanks to Knox™ Core, the core of the lettuce remains nice and white, which is a big advantage for the fresh produce sector. In Germany we are testing several new varieties with this trait: Knox™ Core 45-165 RZ and Knox™ Core 45-188 RZ iceberg lettuce, Knox™ Core Interaction RZ batavia lettuce and Knox™ Core 83-160 RZ oakleaf lettuce.

### Characteristics

- Knox™ Core extends the shelf life for the fresh market
- Interesting for growers, wholesalers and retailers
- Available in various lettuce types



- Headquarters
- Sales subsidiary
- Breeding station
- Production station
- Research and service station



## Crop Specialist Sarah Mayne on snack peppers “Consumers are seeking new, healthy snacks”

Healthy snacks are popular with consumers, and the snack pepper is also benefiting from this trend. It is an interesting crop for growers to produce, not least because the blocky pepper is slowly but surely becoming a commodity. A British grower is currently trialling two newcomers: the red snack pepper 35-1187 RZ and the orange one, 35-1095 RZ.

### Characteristics

- Sweet with a crunchy bite
- Both varieties add value to the category
- Good production characteristics: nice fruit setting and high yield



# From around the world



## Breeder René Aarts on wok cucumber 27-103 RZ “Asian cucumber is interesting for the Western market too”

This spiky cucumber is ideal for use in stir-fries, and in Asia it is completely normal to cook these cucumber types in a wok. This oriental preparation method is now gradually catching on in the rest of the world too, including in the foodservice sector. This cucumber is perfect for production in high-tech greenhouses, not only in China but also in Western markets that are looking for something novel.

### Characteristics

- Small, seedless cavity
- High dry-matter content, resulting in a firmer texture
- Parthenocarpic variety, so only suitable for high-tech production



## Crop Coordinator José Hernández Torres on Robredo RZ “Strong newcomer in broccoli”

Broccoli is a popular vegetable around the world thanks to its healthy nutrients. Although still young, our breeding programme offers strong varieties for both the fresh market and the processing industry. Robredo RZ is primarily intended for sale as a fresh product. It is a spring variety for growers in central and southern Europe, but it is equally suitable for seasonal production in the USA, China and Brazil.

### Characteristics

- Very uniform and attractive heads
- Strong against fungal diseases
- Easy to clean
- Fast-growing variety with a good yield
- Long shelf life after harvesting







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Together with our partners,  
we want to actively contribute  
to the world's food supply  
and stimulate  
vegetable consumption  
by laying the foundations  
for healthy and  
appealing vegetables.