

A new cherimoya variety out of Peru has joined the industry ranks, with the promise of becoming a new consumer favorite on the global market. 

The Rayan cherimoya is a smaller variety with a smooth appearance and comes as a follow up to the relatively new Cumbe variety. The fruit is highlighted for its resistance to Botrytis and its ability to withstand low temperatures. The Rayan variety is also considered easier to harvest.

In 2006, researcher and current Agroindustrias Cumbe partner William Daga discovered the variety in the town of Tapicara in the Huarochirí province. After years of experimenting, Agroindustrias Cumbe started commercial trials in 2012 in Canada and the Netherlands, where clients were so satisfied that the company decided to start taking formal orders.

"The fruit weighs between 300 and 700 grams, which is ideal for export. Peruvian cherimoyas generally weigh more than that and they are very big for exportation," Daga told www.freshfruitportal.com.

The researcher clarified that although many scientists believe that the ideal fruit is a local variety, that is not necessarily the case.

"We have found a variety called Leon from La Mayora Institute in Spain and it is originally from Peru and I found where this variety is. Leon has served as a template because it is a local, smooth variety. Combined with Rayan, the result is a perfect cherimoya," he said.

With respect to the planted surface area for the variety, Daga said there are currently 48 hectares in production in the country and more than 20,000 plants in nurseries. By 2013, an additional 40 to 50 hectares could be added.

"Last year we did a test shipment to Canada and the Netherlands, but this year we hope to send between 35 and 40 tons (MT). Every day they are asking us for more and that is why we are in the certification process for various farms for Global GAP, which would ease export to the European Union," he said.

With respect to profitability, the researcher said the Rayan cherimoya has returns of about US\$25,000 per hectare with production costs of around US\$5,500.

"The plants are smaller and that allows us to save 20% in postharvest. The fruit quality and skin characteristics make it much more accessible to the market, which could place it as one of the most promising varieties from Peru," Daga said.

"Projections for the next three or four years is to expand the surface area to 500-800 hectares. The cherimoya industry in Peru is growing stronger every day, especially on the industrial side. Prices for fresh fruit are very good also, both in Peru and in the international market."

Daga also commented on the possibility of expanding cultivation in other parts of the Andean country.

"We have done some experiments in the Áncash and Ica regions. We are moving forward very well," he said.

Daga added that Rayan trees produce between 80 and 100 kilos each and that the postharvest life is six to seven days if no treatment is given.

For 2013, 100 MT are projected for production, 65 of which will stay on the local market and 35 of which will go to export for the first official commercial year.

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