

*While there are some instances of genetically modified papayas, squash and zucchini, for the most part the produce aisle is free of transgenic food. That is why Canadian company Okanagan Specialty Fruits' (OSF) **first sales season** for Arctic-branded apples is so significant, having gone through the scientific process of silencing the gene that causes browning and then the bureaucratic one of gaining market approval. Founder Neal Carter reveals more in a written response.*

**When we last spoke you said sales could last until January but maybe they'd wrap up before Christmas. When did they end up finishing?**

The fresh fruit supply of Arctic® Goldens from the fall 2017 harvest was quite limited and was exhausted by the end of year. We've been rapidly planting trees and will look forward to expanding our market presence with the fall harvest of 2018.

**Would you say the commercial season went better or worse than you expected?**

We are very pleased with the initial response and sales of Arctic® Golden sliced apples. Getting Arctic® apples to market has been a journey over 20 years in the making so we were extremely excited to finally be able to give consumers who have been patiently waiting the opportunity to try them.

**What are the early indicators for repeat sale and performance metrics in stores?**

We were very pleased with the reception and the consumer response data generated by these initial sales. We know consumers will be looking for fresh Arctic® apples again come fall!

**What kind of feedback, anecdotally, did you get from consumers and retailers?**

We performed several in-store demos which provided us with some very encouraging feedback. Consumers that tried Arctic® apples overwhelmingly agreed that they tasted great and described them as sweet and crispy. The feedback on the packaging of our 10 oz. grab-and-go bags of Arctic® Golden apple slices was also very positive.

The packaging highlights our apples' unique non-browning trait, which enables Arctic® apples to be preservative free, and provides consumers with the convenience factor they desire and an unparalleled eating experience.

Since Arctic® apple slices don't require any anti-browning treatments, any potential off-tastes that may come with them are avoided and we've found in taste tests the majority of

consumers prefer the eating experience of Arctic® Golden over other sliced apple brands.

**Is there any indication as to whether Arctic Golden perform better in some areas than others?**

Early data indicates that people are interested in trying Arctic® apples no matter what city they live in! And, of course, our initial sales were limited to only a few locations. We're eagerly anticipating being able to increase availability to even more locations once larger volumes of fruit are produced.

**How did consumers respond to the non-browning element of the product? Was there much social media activity around this as well?**

People are very intrigued by the unique non-browning trait of Arctic® apples and are always eager to learn more about it and find out how we did it. Consumers really feel a connection with how our non-browning trait can play a substantial role in reducing unnecessary food waste and help get their families eating more apples - the two main goals why Arctic® apples were developed in the first place.

We love it when people post pictures of themselves getting to try Arctic® apples - seeing the excitement on their faces is very rewarding!

**Were there any instances of pushback against the GM issue at stores or from customers?**

There will always be consumers that don't wish to purchase GMOs and we say that is absolutely their choice, but those who are interested in purchasing GMO foods should be entitled to their choice as well.

Undoubtedly, one of the biggest challenges we face not only at our company specifically, but within the whole agricultural biotechnology industry, is the misinformation that is out there regarding biotech foods. There are many common misconceptions about biotech and that often comes simply from lack of familiarity and a fear of the unknown.

We have found that many consumers are not aware that essentially every reputable scientific body that has studied GMOs has concluded they are just as safe as other food on the market. Perhaps the most recent and notable is that, after an exhaustive 2016 study, the National Academies of Sciences concluded that there is "no substantiated evidence of a difference in risks to human health between current commercially available genetically

engineered (GE) crops and conventionally bred crops.”

One of our initiatives here at Okanagan Specialty Fruits Inc. is community outreach and education. Our goal is to educate as many consumers as possible about the facts and benefits around biotechnology, and to always be available to engage and answer questions. We have found in our experience that transparency and enabling the public to experience Arctic® apples firsthand are very impactful in educating consumers and gaining their support.

**Is there anything else you'd like to add?**

We have lots of exciting things planned for 2018, including the addition of our newest Arctic® apple variety, the Arctic® Granny. Stay tuned for future announcements!

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