

California-headquartered fruit breeder, grower and marketer Sun World is enjoying strong growth worldwide, with its table grape varietal brands increasing in volume from key production countries and penetrating further into the North American, European and Asian markets.

Two of the company's newer table grape releases that are driving some of the highest growth at the moment are Autumn Crisp, a late-season seedless green grape, and Adora Seedless, a late-season black grape.

"We have high hopes for those two new releases and continue to be encouraged by how they perform, not only in Southern Hemisphere countries but in the Northern Hemisphere as well," David Marguleas, president of Sun World Innovations, told FreshFruitPortal.com.

"Right now the biggest drivers in the Sun World portfolio - and, it appears that the varieties that are making the biggest difference in many growers' lives around the world - would be the varieties that we market under the Autumn Crisp brand as well as the Adora Seedless brand."

The two varietal brands are in greater supply this current season from South Africa - which enjoys the largest concentration of Sun World table grape varieties in the Southern Hemisphere - as well as Chile, Peru, Brazil and Australia.

"Those two varieties are leading the way in the Sun World portfolio and we think they'll set the stage for a number of our newer introductions over the course of the next two or three years," Marguleas said.

He also noted that one of the company's more senior varietal brands, Sable Seedless, continues to see strong interest from retailers and producers, and is now "firmly established" at retail in the U.K., Australia, the U.S. and Canada.

Sun World now has 1,500 licensed table grape growers and 60 licensed marketers from 12 countries, which Marguleas said is a huge benefit to retailers as they collectively ensure a year-round supply of branded varieties. This continuous supply helps to create good momentum, which is especially useful for penetrating newer markets like Asia, where consumer acceptance of new and seedless varieties is growing rapidly.

"There is strong growth coming from Asia, with the exception of course during our Northern Hemisphere season in light of the trade spat with China - grape exports were off considerably, as you would expect," he said. "But aside from what we hope was an anomaly

in 2018, we've seen strong growth in the Asian markets for Sun World varieties from a number of different growing regions."

"We've certainly seen tremendous growth in Southeast Asia, we continue to see growth on the continent in Europe, and of course the North American market continues to be hugely important - not only for our own American production but also from our South American growing regions, Peru, Chile, to some degree Brazil, and more recently South Africa."

New varieties in the pipeline

Sun World has a number of new early and late ripening white, red and black table grapes in the pipeline, Marguleas said. They are all seedless, many with neutral flavor profiles and some with new fruity flavors as well.

He explained that Sun World was aiming to provide growers with varieties that would not be harvested during countries' heaviest volume periods.

"We think that there's more opportunity to provide producers with varieties that fill gaps in the market place, and likewise to help retailers source grapes during the shoulders of the season when the majority of supply occurs in the middle," he said.

"But of course the new growing regions of the world are starting to change that formula. Production of grapes in countries like Colombia, Peru and Brazil and parts of Mexico are enabling production at times that were previously not available."

Asked what the future may hold for publicly available varieties, in an industry seeing rapidly rising volumes of proprietary varieties, Marguleas said they would always have a place in the market.

"There are today more than 90 seedless table grape varieties available to growers and retailers, many of them are public and many of them are from proprietary breeding programs," he said.

"I think whether they're public or private is really not the material way to view this. There are some important public varieties that have wonderful flavor profiles, terrific post-harvest qualities and can be grown very efficiently, so we're very appreciative of the many public varieties that have been in production for many decades.

"But increasingly I think the consumer is looking for new eating experiences and the

opportunity to find and enjoy varieties from a number of different growing locations that have the kind of shelf life and texture and eating qualities that they appreciate. And more often than not, some of the newer private varieties meet those needs than some of the traditional public varieties have."

The rising number and prevalence of newer varieties that better fit many consumers' preferences also means that consumers will increasingly start to look for different varietal brands at retail, he said, particularly in regions of the world where varietal branding has become more popular.

"There are still some traditional retailers that refer to grapes as white grapes and black and red, and we think that there is an opportunity for the supermarket industry to help consumers identify varieties that they enjoy," he said.

Upcoming Global Grape Summit in June

A broad array of important topics such as these will be discussed later this year at the inaugural Global Grape Summit, where a diverse range of industry players, including breeders, growers, buyers and retailers from the world's top production and import countries, will meet.

The commercially focused event is co-organized by Yentzen Group and *Produce Business* magazine and will take place on June 5, on the first day of the London Produce Show and Conference, which is the largest event in the U.K. for the fresh fruit and vegetable sector.

"The new Global Grape Summit, produced in tandem with the popular London Produce Show and an event Sun World is proud to support, is long overdue and promises to be another fantastic produce showcase," Marguleas said.

"Moreover, the Global Grape Summit is a fitting way to recognize the increasingly international aspect of the grape industry as well as the importance of seamless supply, novel growing regions that are altering supply calendars and availability, and of course the dramatic change that variety development brings to building grape demand and sales.

"It will be a 'must-attend' for anyone engaged in the global grape supply chain."

For more information on the Global Grape Summit, please visit www.globalgrapesummit.com or write to grapesummit@yc.cl.

