

Not many fruits have seen such a rapid introduction of so many new varieties as table grapes. Exponentially rising volumes of a plethora of new cultivars, both proprietary and public, are now being grown and exported from production countries around the world, delighting consumers with improved eating experiences and helping to de-commoditize the category.

But competition among these varieties in the world's top markets is fierce, and a winning marketing strategy is essential to triumph in the long term.



Don Goodwin

That is why Don Goodwin, the founder and president of U.S.-based Golden Sun Marketing will enlighten attendees at the upcoming Global Grape Summit on June 5 with his perspective on the matter during a session entitled "Marketing Table Grapes for Success".

The inaugural Global Grape Summit will take place in conjunction with the London Produce Show and Conference, bringing together the most important players from across the global table grape supply chain to share ideas and discuss forward-thinking approaches in the fast-evolving industry.

As a produce industry veteran, Goodwin has previously worked at Target, where he launched the retail chain's produce division, taking the company to nearly 100 stores before he left. He also held the position of COO at Green Giant Fresh.

Around 15 years ago, he founded his Minnesota-based consultancy firm that helps produce companies across the entire supply chain with business strategy, development and marketing. It has been behind many well-known fruit and vegetable varietal brands, including Opal apples, Lori Anne peaches, and Sunions.

At FreshFruitPortal.com, we caught up with Goodwin to hear about the kind of insights Global Grape Summit attendees will garner during his presentation.

"We've become really good at what it takes to be successful with a new variety, and I think that's really appropriate for the grape audience," Goodwin said. Highlighting that his company has been able to study the proliferation of apple varieties, he noted that the table grape industry is perhaps five or ten years behind the apple industry, which has also seen an explosion of new varieties bursting onto the market.

According to Goodwin, this is incredibly relevant, as the most important elements of how to handle a new variety are often applicable to other produce items.

"We have learned some things along the way. In the apple industry, you've got successes and failures, and there are some key attributes to the success and key misses to the failures that are really common," he said.

By providing these valuable insights to the event's attendees, Goodwin will help them avoid the mistakes commonly made by others and highlight what needs to be done to thrive when marketing table grapes.

"What I want to really focus on what it takes to win with new varieties," he said, explaining that success often stems from knowledge of new concepts related to areas such as marketing strategies and packaging technologies.

However, that is not to say that the most important commonality of every successful new variety isn't flavor.

"If it doesn't deliver on flavor, packaging and marketing will not overcome that. Our focus is going to be on giving people examples - I can tell people how we took a peach to market that sells at 75% higher price than a regular peach, I can tell you how we've been able to get an apple variety to one of the three of four top sellers in the industry that has over 30 unique varieties, and why that happened," he said.

"Of course, it all starts with a good product, but I want to show people what made it different."

On the packaging side, some of the topics Goodwin will talk about include the opportunities in offering a wider range of formats that provide greater choices for consumers. He explained that, from a U.S. perspective, table grapes are primarily sold in random-weight bags, but by evolving the category to use more top seal containers or clam shells, that could lead to a rise in sales.

Another important aspect to take into consideration is the increasing push-back against plastic packaging, which is building steam around the world and will have significant implications for the table grape industry.

"The entire grape industry - wherever you're at in the world - is going to be challenged to address this in a way that delivers on the retailers' desire to have more recyclable or sustainable packaging options, and we don't have that yet," he said, adding: "You've got to

have some pretty broad thinking of how to deal with" some of the complex issues surrounding sustainable packaging.

On the marketing side, Goodwin explained that there are some important changes taking place that the table grape industry needs to be aware of in order to develop and implement the most successful strategies.

"What we're evolving to is marketing directly to those consumers that shop in the stores where our products are in distribution. So it's essentially what I define as shopper marketing. You can do all you want on social marketing and general digital advertising, but what I want to do is talk to the customer that shops at the store where my product is available and that is predisposed to buy grapes," he said.

He said that Golden Sun Marketing is working with a company that's "very sophisticated" in helping to identify who those customers are. The results of this highly targeted marketing, he explained, are "astounding".

"We're seeing some phenomenal results from when we market right around the store. You take a Kroger store for example, and we can market to those consumers who shop Kroger and I know my product's in that store and...I can influence sales quite effectively.

"The days of being able to just do general marketing - we've learned pretty quickly - are largely ineffective because we don't have our product in every store. But if I'm using very sophisticated tools, I can determine that I can be really savvy in driving sales."

## **Global Grape Summit**

The Global Grape Summit recently announced its speakers and panelists, including retailers, exporters, marketers and breeders from around the world, for the inaugural edition in a few weeks' time. Numerous educational sessions have also been scheduled to provide attendees with insights they need to be successful in a fast-moving industry.

The commercially-focused, one-day conference, which is co-organized by *Produce Business* magazine and Yentzen Group, will be held at the luxurious JW Marriott Grosvenor House in Mayfair as part of The London Produce Show and Conference, the largest event in the UK — the 5th largest economy in the world — for the fresh fruit and vegetable sector. The Global Grape Summit will take place one day before the London Produce Show's one-day trade exhibition.

"Grapes are one of those commodities where if you're a producer of grapes in the world, you're supplying many many countries. It's one of the more global commodities we have in all of produce," Goodwin said.

"The interconnectedness of the grape industry is more apparent than any in any place in produce, in my feeling, so I think the opportunity to bring people together and talk about the industry is spot-on. I'm looking to learn more about the industry and the parts that I don't see every day more effectively and to network with people. I think it's really fascinating."

**[Click here](#)** for more information on the Global Grape Summit 2019, including tickets and sponsorship opportunities.