

BerryWorld South Africa is forecasting blueberry supplies to rise by more than 40% to over 7,500 metric tons (MT) this season.

The announcement comes as the company celebrates 'significant growth' in shopper penetration, 25 years in soft fruit, and a newly launched brand re-design.

"We are expanding our production and our customer base and continuing to develop our IP and systems through dedicated R&D work," said Jason Richardson, managing director of BerryWorld South Africa.

"We recently held our Annual Grower Day event in Stellenbosch, an event which brings our dedicated and ever expanding BerryWorld team together with all our growers, in order to align, plan and prepare for the upcoming season and the long-term future of the business."

He highlighted the company's Mountain Blue Orchard (MBO) varieties continue to excite.

"These exclusive varieties offer our customers superior size, great flavour profiles and texture characteristics that provide firm berries with a wonderful crunch," he said.

"The flavours we are seeing provide a great balance between sweetness and acidity, allowing us to meet the needs of every nation's palette and step change our blueberry offer. We are confident that blueberry consumers around the world will be delighted during the 2019 season."

Founder and breeder of the MBO program, Ridley Bell, recently visited some of BerryWorld's South African and Zimbabwean production sites, as well as dedicated R&D sites and was impressed with both the commercial production and trials.

"BerryWorld are extremely focused and dedicated in working with our varieties to obtain the very best from production," said Bell.

"My recent visit to South Africa and Zimbabwe was very enjoyable. I was very pleased to see the yields, flavour profiles, crunch and size that they are achieving."

According to Chloe Butler, head of insights at BerryWorld UK, even mature markets like the U.K. present opportunities to drive penetration.

"Kantar data for the UK shows that in the 12w/e 31st December 2018 (peak of the South African season), market penetration on blueberries was 24.8%," she said.

"By comparison the summer average was 36% (April to June 2019), demonstrating that there is significant head room to encourage summer blueberry shoppers to continue to buy in the winter."

BerryWorld says the MBO varietal offer gives it the opportunity to bridge the typical gap that comes after the end of Polish and U.K. supplies.

Alongside BerryWorld Group, the South African business also celebrates 25 years in the soft fruit industry, which will coincide with a new look brand at Fruit Logistic Asia.

Stefan Viljoen, BerryWorld, South Africa's sales manager said: "As part of the global roll out of the newly designed BerryWorld brand, we have now launched in Singapore and Malaysia. It's been fantastic to celebrate our 25th anniversary year with a new brand and I'm excited seeing it come alive across the globe".

The company said the rebrand project involved collaborative work between growers and staff which centred on product quality, design and packaging specifications with the goal of being a "sustainable, commercially viable brand" which delivers for both growers and consumers.

Charlotte Knowles, head of brand & marketing at BerryWorld said: "Our new global brand now has a clear story and identity which brings to life BerryWorld's 25-year expertise; we hope that the contemporary and recognisable 'B' will encourage consumers to trial our products and that our award-winning quality will keep them coming back for more".

"The new brand is simple yet recognisable, wherever you are in the world. The white B has been designed to provide a window which showcases our best asset, our berries; it's something our consumer insight has taught us is vital for shoppers at the point of purchase.

"The white colour was chosen to represent the 'goodness' that lies at the heart of our brand, providing a crisp and clean visual contrast against any of the soft fruit lines contained in our punnets."