

T&G Global is set to harvest the first Australian commercial crop of new "super-sized, superior tasting" blueberry varieties to be launched in retail stores this December.

The global fresh produce company has secured 16 of the latest and best genetics from breeders Plant & Food Research in New Zealand and USA-based Fall Creek Farm and Nursery, and over the last two years has successfully conducted trials of the premium blueberries with selected growers in five Australian states.

Danny Nightingale, T&G's Global Variety Commercialisation Manager said what's exciting about this suite of unique blueberry varieties is their ability to produce fruit all year-round.

"We know Australian's love blueberries, with more than 17,000 tonnes sold each year. With these unique premium varieties we'll be able to grow blueberries all-year-round, compared to them currently being available for only approximately eight months," Danny said.

"We're incredibly pleased with the results of our trials, with the blueberries being bigger in size and tasting superior to what's currently available.

"Our commitment to securing the best genetics saw us scour the world to find unique plant varieties which meet consumers' needs, which is what we found in these varieties from Plant & Food Research and Fall Creek Farm and Nursery. Over the past two years, we've worked alongside a team of passionate growers in Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, New South Wales and Western Australia to trial them, so it's great to see it coming together, with consumers able to experience them at the end of 2021."

The trials have included a mixture of the new varieties including Cargo, Last Call and Blue Ribbon. It is the first time these varieties have been grown in Australia, for the Australian market.

With 30 hectares already in the ground and producing high-quality results, and another 30 hectares soon to be planted, T&G expects volumes to steadily increase in 2021. The blueberries will be sold under T&G's popular premium brand, Orchard Rd.

"This is a game-changer for the local berry sector because now we can grow in Australia, for Australian consumers, year-round, without the need to import from other countries," Danny said.

Danny said the new varieties are strong performers and growers are impressed. "They're easier to pick and the yield is significantly higher than other berry varieties, which is great news for growers because they'll get more berries per hectare," he said.