

# Dutch berry fruit nurseries collaborate to maximise opportunities

reports Malcolm Withnall

The coming together of six major nurseries in Holland involved with the propagation and supply of modern strawberry varieties is a significant development for European growers, including those in the UK. Phillip Lieten and Bert Meulenbroek, speaking at last year's British Berry Conference, outlined these developments and revealed the prospects for new cultivars becoming available to further develop the market.

'Fragaria Holland bv' is a joint venture working within the well-proven high quality Dutch plant supply system under the NAK-T certification scheme. It focuses on 25 major varieties sourced, under licence, from all the major breeding programmes around the world. Included in these sources are East Malling, SCRI, the University of California, Darbonne and Planasa. The PRT programme at Wageningen in Holland is an integral part of Fragaria Holland bv. Bert Meulenbroek's PRT- Fresh Forward agency is concentrating on 10 strawberry varieties, but has a wider remit for the development of other horticultural plant material into the European market and markets further afield.

"We are pleased to report progress on the variety Sonata, where we have seen

the areas of nursery plant propagation double from 40 to 80 hectares from 2005 to 2006, then increase again to 120 hectares in 2007, reflecting the increased demand for this exciting variety," explained Phillip Lieten. "In the USA in 2006 we have seen the establishment of interesting field trials of Figaro, a new cultivar to the 60 day plant market, where 100,000 plants have been planted on 50 sites around the US".

Bert Meulenbroek confirmed his belief that companies such as Fresh Forward contribute to the essential role of testing and evaluating new varieties. "Whilst we are involved with such diverse horticultural crops as apples, iris, lily roses, hemp and caraway, for berry fruits, such as strawberries, variety testing is a key factor in recognising potential in new cultivars," he said. "We are using benchmark growers and prominent organisations to

ensure such work is maintained at the front edge of commercial success and, of course, involved in the processes of commercial development, whether involving arrangements for exclusivity or not".

He revealed a number of promising varieties emerging in collaboration with Fragaria Holland bv, including Salsa, Figaro and Sonata, together with other Fresh Forward varieties. "Salsa has many attributes that would be useful to PYO and direct retailing businesses, having very good flavours and large fruits," commented Bert. "Figaro is firm skinned to assist transportation problems, has attractive orange-red fruits and shows characteristics that suggest it has some tolerance to low temperatures in and around flowering when grown on outdoor sites".

But it was Sonata that was attracting the attention of Continental growers, where its

Elsanta-equivalent yields and strong flavours have made it an attractive newcomer to the market. "One of its most important attributes is its minimal production of misshapen fruits and high percentage of marketable fruits," he continued. "When you add Sonata's firm flesh, good shelf life (2 days longer than Elsanta) and ease of picking, it is finding favour amongst growers across Europe".

He cited performance figures from a 60 day plant trial, of 23 to 24 tonnes per hectare for Sonata (against 17 tonnes for Elsanta) of which 1.9 tonnes were Class 2 for Sonata and 2.5 tonnes for Elsanta. He also felt that Sonata exhibited frost resistance characteristics, but experience gained from the field suggested that it required more winter chilling units for maximum flower generation than Elsanta. ♦

Now also available:

## Sonata



- Aardbei Extra B.V., Haaren, HOLLAND
- Tel: 0031 411 621693, Fax: 0031 411 623782
- Email: [info@aardbei-extra.nl](mailto:info@aardbei-extra.nl)
- For more FPP info visit us at [www.aardbei-extra.nl](http://www.aardbei-extra.nl)



# STRAWBERRY PLANTS

## DARSELECT - ELSANTA - FIGARO SONATA - EVERBEARERS

FLEVOPLANT: HEALTHY PLANTS

GOOSSENS FLEVOPLANT BV  
Enserweg 9  
8307 PJ Ens ~ Holland  
Sales: Dorus Verhoeven  
T: 0031 6 411 813 61  
F: 0031 527 2532 61  
e-mail:  
[dorusverhoeven@flevoplant.nl](mailto:dorusverhoeven@flevoplant.nl)  
[www.flevoplant.nl](http://www.flevoplant.nl)