

## Making moves in India

Asiafruit looks at the latest developments in India's fresh produce industry, with companies breaking new ground across the supply chain.

### Rockit launches with Kane Williamson



Rockit Global's partnership with New Zealand cricket captain, Kane Williamson, is helping the apple company make inroads in India. Williamson signed on as a global ambassador with Rockit last year.

"Kane is a high-quality individual, he lets the results do the talking but he's brave and innovative in his captaincy, and as a player," says Rockit Global's Mark Pay. "We've been able to communicate what Kane values and what we value; they're very much aligned."

Williamson's high-profile has been leveraged by Rockit through digital and social media activations. He has also headlined POS materials and consumer competitions. In cricket-mad India, Williamson has both pulling power and influence.

"Cricket is not just a sport in India, it's part of people's lives. Connecting with Kane, we're able to enter consumers' lives in a way that we wouldn't be able to otherwise," Pay says. "He's got over 1m fans on Instagram and other social media platforms, so we're able to connect with consumers over different points along the journey – when we launch and when our fruit becomes available in market. It's not only giving us a wider audience; it's starting conversations with consumers."

### Jupiter Group's first Arra 15 crop

Jupiter Group has reported on a successful season with the Arra 15 grape variety (marketed as Arra Sweeties) in India's Nashik region.

The UK-headquartered company is the exclusive license holder for Arra grapes in India, in conjunction with its partners Sahyadri Farms. Jupiter says the Arra 15 crop in Nashik filled 2,200 cartons (4.5kg) per hectare of production this season. This figure is expected to increase to approximately 5,000 cartons per hectare in 2021/22.

While there weren't too many extreme weather changes in Nashik this season, up to 120mm of rain fell in some parts of the region in early January. Jupiter was pleased to report minimal damage to the crop.

"The quality and size of the bunches are impressive and even after two seasons of heavy rains, Arra 15 was not affected at all," says Jupiter Group's table grape consultant Andre Vermaak. "I see a really great future for Arra 15 in India."

Indian-grown Arra 15 was exported to the UK, Europe, China, Singapore, Malaysia, the UAE, Saudi Arabia and the Maldives this season. Mark Tweddle, chief executive of Jupiter Group, says Arra varieties have the potential to grow the value proposition for Indian grapes in international markets as production volumes ramp up over coming seasons.

"These are really exciting times for us in India," explains Tweddle. "A dream that started in 2012 is coming to fruition, with the first commercial volumes of Arra 15 this season. We are now planting 400 acres (161ha) of Arra 15, with 1,000 new acres (404ha) planned for 2022, and we are also testing a further 12 new varieties."



### Parth Farms to double blueberry production

Parth Farms kickstarted the new blueberry season from its farm in Maharashtra at the end of March. "We are seeing excellent quality this season with increased volumes and better berry sizing since the plants are well rooted and have strengthened," says the company's Parth Karvat. "Due to the successful outcome of our pilot plantation last season, we have planted additional area to enable us to double production in two years."

## Spar launches snacking varieties



Multinational retailer Spar has introduced new snacking vegetable varieties, bred by Rijk Zwaan, into its stores in India.

The move is part of Spar's focus on providing innovative, high-quality, locally grown fresh produce and tapping into the trends of snacking and healthy eating.

In early 2021, Spar India rolled out a range of Sn!bs-branded snacking vegetables in four stores in Bangalore. The launch was met with a positive response, according to Venkatarreddy TG, Spar India's business head of fruit and vegetables.

"Snacking is a growing trend around the world and India is no exception. Consumers are increasingly eating snacks instead of meals," says Venkatarreddy.

"The Sn!bs brand enables us to offer our customers something different: surprising, attractive, fresh and healthy vegetable snacks. Additionally, these snack vegetables have a longer shelf-life, which helps to reduce store losses."

Spar has created various mixes of snack tomatoes, snack peppers and snack cucumbers in red, yellow, orange and green colour combinations.

"Consumer feedback has been very positive. The colour contrast is very attractive and stimulates impulse buys and the specially designed Sn!bs packaging certainly helps too," adds Venkatarreddy.

Spar India is confident snack vegetables will be a success given they align with the trends of snacking and healthy eating. It plans to increase marketing activities while also working on supply consistency.

Rijk Zwaan India worked alongside Spar on the Sn!bs roll out, including product positioning in-store. It also supported in-store sampling activities.

## FruitRoute reaches consumers

INI Farms' traceability programme FruitRoute has reached a new milestone with 10,000 tonnes of QR code-labelled fruit reaching consumers worldwide.

In September 2020, the company added QR codes to all of its fruit for international and domestic markets to implement the programme, which enables end consumers to trace the fruit back to the farmer. Consumers from all of INI's markets have engaged with the technology, with the most scans coming from India, Germany, Iran, Malaysia and Iraq.

INI Farms says the quality and safety of its fruit has always been a priority and enabling consumers and distribution partners to view the journey of its fruit provides assurance.

Once scanned, the QR code allows the user to track the fruit from farm to table, showing them where the fruit is grown and who it is grown by. The feature also provides footprint data of the journey of each piece of fruit from pre-harvest to market shelf.

In the future, INI Farms says it will look to further innovate this feature, allowing customers to virtually interact with growers, opening up possibilities for two-way communication.

In addition to the information it brings to consumers, FruitRoute provides INI Farms with extra data that can be used by the company to further understand consumer behaviour and run targeted consumer campaigns.

INI Farms hopes the feature will also help build consumer loyalty by offering a transparent and trustful brand with a good food safety record, qualities that have grown in importance for consumers during the Covid-19 pandemic.

