

# Boysenberries picked for major award

By Anne Hardie

An international juice award is getting New Zealand boysenberries recognised overseas in countries where it's a little-known fruit.

**B**erryfruit New Zealand markets about 75 per cent of New Zealand's boysenberry production overseas, including the seedless puree that was used with apple in the winning blend for the Best New Juice Product at the World Juice Conference 2010 in Geneva in October.

While apple and boysenberry juice may be common in New Zealand, the blend packaged for Sainsbury's Supermarkets is a new taste for its customers in the United Kingdom.

Berryfruit New Zealand's sales and marketing manager, Roger Brough, says the juice has been on Sainsbury's shelves for the past 18 months and is now selling well. A similar juice using New Zealand boysenberries is now being offered through Marks and Spencers, with more buyers seeking the berries since the award.

It's a well timed promotion as canes in Nelson, where the bulk of the boysenberry crop is grown, are laden with fruit following perfect weather for pollination and fruit set, raising hopes of a bumper harvest. It follows a tough season last year when wind hammered the gardens and the industry lost a significant quantity of fruit.

Mr Brough says it was a challenge for the grower-owned co-operative to fill customers' orders last year and it was done by "mixing and matching" of individual quick frozen fruit, block frozen, puree and juice concentrate. All the processing is done on contract in Nelson and then marketed to customers in Australia, Japan, United States, Europe and Scandinavia, with expansion underway into Asia.

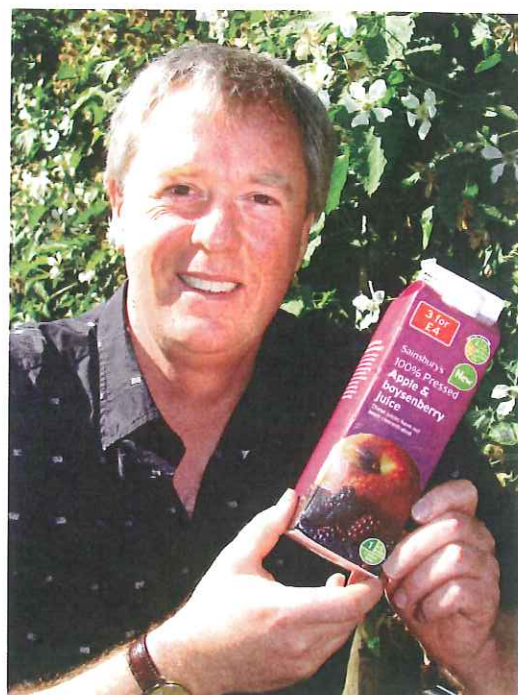
"We're looking forward to this year to be able to capitalise on new opportunities," he says.

"In the world scheme of things, we are a niche player and in many markets overseas there is a low awareness of boysenberries. If you walked down an aisle in Sainsburys and asked what a boysenberry is, you might get one that had heard of them."

The only other countries that grow boysenberries are North American and Chile and as the fruit is difficult to transport fresh, it rarely appears on shop shelves in that form in other countries.

"So we have to find other ways to introduce the flavour," says Mr Brough.

In Germany, New Zealand boysenberries are being offered as dessert fruit in glass jars to enable customers to see the berry and its colour. Berryfruit New Zealand has produced photos, recipes and



Berryfruit New Zealand sales and marketing manager, Roger Brough, with the winning juice.

information about the berry to promote the jars of boysenberries and encourage customers to try them.

For New Zealand growers, an increased awareness of their fruit in established markets is already attracting more customers. Mr Brough says some of the existing gardens have the ability to expand as the market grows and there's a two-way dialogue between the co-operative and its 20 growers supplying fruit to keep the industry up-to-date with the market.

In the 21 years since the co-operative was established, the number of growers has consolidated, but production has increased, says Mr Brough. ☐