



June 2011 Feature Story :

"Global Blackcurrant Production Crashes as Demand Set to Soar."

Production estimates gathered at the 16th European Blackcurrant Conference held in Netherlands last month (May 2011) show a potential production drop of more than 40% as total production looks set to fall from 166,000 tonnes in 2010 to 94,000 tonnes in 2011.

All producing countries expect a drop against their 2010 crops but the most significant is the Polish crop estimate. Poland is the largest producer and in 2010 produced 110, 000 tonnes. In 2011 it expects to produce around 55,000 tonnes.

“Bad weather is the culprit with heavy snowdrifts, bud-stripping strong winds, or paradoxically, drought, all playing their part,” says International Blackcurrant Association President and leading blackcurrant agronomist Jim Grierson.

Financial returns to the blackcurrant grower are not good at present. For the last two decades the industry has been plagued by rollercoaster pricing. Low prices cause growers to pull out plants. This results in low production and prices go up. Increased prices means growers come back into the market. And their new plantings come into full production after their third year of production and suddenly, a surplus. And prices plummet again, says Grierson.

“But now we have a situation where production is down significantly just at a time when research and new product breakthroughs, such as the new sports powder formulations, are showing the true potential of the blackcurrant. This is likely to see a significant increase in farm-gate prices, both this year and next, as marketers lock in supply to meet the demands they’re creating,” says Grierson.

“The good news is that it’s likely the combination of real innovation and short-supply will break the rollercoaster farm-gate price experience of the last 20 years. By the time the production comes up again I expect to see new horizons in demand. Because that new demand is based on real science for new consumer values the price movements create by short supply will likely stay locked-in,” says Grierson.

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