

Cosmic Crisp piques growers' interest

APPLES: In an aggressive campaign, US growers are ripping out Red Delicious to make way for 13 million trees

Hawke's Bay growers gathered at Johnny Appleseed's test block to review one of the most popular apples grown in recent history.

The apple, known by the breeder code WA 38, has come from Washington State University's apple breeding programme, and is sold under the brand name Cosmic Crisp.

American growers have planted 13 million trees in just three years and removed significant plantings of Red Delicious in the process.

With an aggressive multimillion-dollar marketing programme WA 38 is quickly becoming a global apple. Most apples have taken several decades to get this sort of critical mass in the market.

Jack Hughes, from Fruition Horticulture, has been contracted to help advise growers on managing the new variety and the optimum harvest time in New Zealand.

Regular maturity monitoring has suggested now is the optimal harvest time to balance maximum flavour and storage.

Hughes discussed the opportunity of a one-pick harvest. Being such a highly coloured apple means pickers cannot easily distinguish the fruit's maturity so one pick becomes extremely efficient.

Growers wanting to grow WA 38 can contact any of the licensed



marketers; Johnny Appleseed Ltd, Te Mata Exports, Mr Apple Ltd, J Bostock Ltd, Freshmax Ltd and Pickmee Fresh.

Each marketer has been allocated test trees that have been planted in a range of sites.

Small volumes of fruit will be harvested this year for market testing. This has been eagerly awaited as the release of the imported plant material

had been delayed by the MPI post quarantine response in 2018.

The WA 38 tree is very productive with medium/large fruit. The highly coloured, maroon apple has a crisp, juicy texture with a sweet, tangy flavour.

Cosmic Crisp apples have been rated by consumers for their explosive juice and refreshing bite, which come from their Honeycrisp x Enter-

prise parentage.

Storage trials last year confirmed that WA 38 maintains its texture and juiciness for long periods without losses.

Growers have access to the Cosmic Crisp website to learn more about the apple and best practice management.

The apple is an exciting option for growers to have in their variety mix. ■

A great turnout from apple growers to assess harvest maturity of WA38 Cosmic Crisp apples.

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