

Chile: New jumbo raspberries launched for warmer climates

A Chilean breeding program has produced new “extra large” raspberry varieties which are intended for cultivation in warmer climates than normal for the fruit.

The project began in 2009 and has been led by Mariana Gambardella, a professor at the Catholic University of Chile, in conjunction with the Horticultural Industry’s Technology Consortium.

“The aim of the breeding program was to create a fruit with higher yields and better quality,” Gambardella said.

“The main variety grown in Chile [Heritage] is an old variety that has certain positive characters, but it is not really in line with the modern demands of the farm or the market.”

The breeders were looking for a variety that would give growers a competitive edge in the marketplace, as Heritage’s low productivity was affecting opportunities.

Gambardella also highlighted that while breeding programs often take between 10 and 12 years to develop a new variety, these varieties took only seven years to develop.

“We did a record job in the sense that within three years we produced our first three varieties, which are on the market at the moment,” she said.

The new varieties’ names are Santa Clara, Santa Catalina and Santa Teresa. Each one weighs an average of around 6 grams, compared to the Heritage average of 2.4 grams. Yields are said to be around double those of Heritage, she added.

The varieties also start to produce fruit after just one year, and in Chile are harvested from February to late April, which is a longer period than Heritage.

Gambardella said that another important characteristic was the varieties’ adaptability to warmer climates, in contrast to most raspberries which are grown in cooler areas. She said they are being grown successfully in Spain and Mexico.

“We even took these varieties to the Aysén region [a cold region in Chile’s far south]” and they also grew there, she said. “They are very adaptable – what we call high plasticity ... they have the ability to adapt to diverse climates.