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MEDIA RELEASE

Could dragon fruit become one of the most sought after super fruits worldwide?

Even though the South African dragon fruit industry is relatively young, the fruit as we know it today, has been produced commercially since 1990 in Vietnam, Malaysia, Thailand, Taiwan, Sri Lanka, China, Israel, California and Central America.

Grown in tropical and subtropical regions of the world, the plantings of this fruit are increasing in South Africa, where producers are fast establishing a growing export industry. Pioneers in South Africa's dragon fruit sector recently established the Southern Africa Dragon Fruit Association.

PMA South Africa's live broadcast in partnership with Beanstalk.Global at the end of September, brought together a panel of experts who discussed the potential of the dragon fruit industry in South Africa. On the panel was Michael Muller, from the Muller Family Boerdery Trust; Fred Steyn, newly appointed Chair of the Southern Africa Dragon Fruit Association; CT van der Merwe, CEO of AL 3 Boerdery; Laura Strever from Amorentia Estate and Nursery; and Jason Sampson, from the Department of Plant and Soil Sciences at the University of Pretoria.

Amorentia Nursery, based in Tzaneen, Limpopo, is just one of the nurseries making the new sweet cultivars available. Strever said Amorentia Nursery started propagating dragon fruit under the trademarked name, Amorentia Sweet Dragon Fruit, after they caught a glimpse of the potential of the new tasty varieties. She described the fruit as exotic, vibrant, exciting and enticing. Moreover, it is versatile; you can eat it fresh, drink it juiced and use in more complex recipes with other products.

"These features make dragon fruit marketable, and consumers have already started adding it to their shopping baskets. Not so long ago, one did not find people putting blueberries in their shopping baskets. With the way it was marketed, blueberries became a staple food for many people," said Strever.

Van der Merwe and Sampson agreed that dragon fruit could become one of the most popular fruits worldwide if one has the right influencers and educate consumers on the health benefits of this super fruit. The fruit is harvested from around December/January until April/May and provides a huge export potential to European and US markets during their off-seasons.

The cold chain is vital in delivering good quality fruit to consumers, especially for producers who are farming far away from marketing facilities.

“At this stage, most of the dragon fruit worldwide are exported by ship, while South Africa can export by airfreight to reach markets in a much shorter time. With efficient packhouse operations, the fruit could be harvested and delivered to global markets within a week,” said Steyn.

Muller concluded that dragon fruit production is a manual, labour-intensive industry, creating much-needed employment in South Africa.

About Produce Marketing Association

Produce Marketing Association (PMA) is the leading trade association representing companies from every segment of the global produce and floral supply chain. PMA helps members grow by providing connections that expand business opportunities and increase sales and consumption. PMA has a unique network of more than 53,000 member contacts from more than 2,900 member companies, which are based in 54 countries across six continents. These contacts span all sizes and types of businesses across the supply chain. For more information, visit www.pma.com

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