



## Sweet Premier Star on the rise

**Twelve years after it first appeared as a curious branch on a Royal Gala tree in a Nelson home orchard, Premier Star (PVR) has been successfully trialled under commercial conditions in Asian export markets this season.**

In its inaugural season, only a small quantity of 3,000 cartons was carefully marketed in Singapore and Thailand by joint venture partner DMPalmer NZ Ltd. This will be followed by a more substantial programme of 7,000 cartons in the coming season followed by an estimated 20,000 cartons in 2013.

DMPalmer Asian export market manager Jane Quinn says Asia was deliberately targeted “with our first shipments as Premier Star is high in sugars and has an outstanding bright red colour. This ticks all the right boxes to meet Asia market preferences and when combined with early

maturity dates which enable shipment in February, we think it holds its commercial proposition with real promise”.

Jane says the variety has amazing naturally high colour and is comfortably packed to a 70%+ colour spec.

DMP general manager David Brasell says that with patience and responsibility, “our JV with Greg and Stephanie Buck has gone about assessing the “must have” commercial criteria of the variety and we are pleased with what we see”.

In Thailand DMP’s customer trialled Premier Star with supermarkets and wholesalers. Bangkok wetmarkets can be very demanding on fruit quality but nevertheless wholesale customers rated Premier Star an A+ for taste, sweetness, quality and colour. In mid to high end supermarkets, Premier Star was featured with other premium fruits on special stands which the DMP importer showcases regularly. Comments from buyers that the “bright red colour stood out on supermarket shelves”.

Both customers advised many new varieties are currently being pushed into Asia with all sorts of promotional money

### Exclusive Propagator of ‘Premier Star’ trees

Available to all growers to supply fruit to DM Palmer Ltd.

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and promises being thrown around. While the Asian palate is becoming a little more open to tangy acidic flavoured apples, the preference for sweet, bright red fruit will remain overwhelming so that's where we have to focus.

"You have to get the taste profile right" says Jane. New Zealand has had an understandable history of creating fantastic new varieties for the American, UK and European taste preferences. But these days, if we don't design for Asia, we will miss the mega trend of our times. Our Thailand customer for example has seen other imported apples being promoted heavily in supermarkets for up to three years with slow consumer take up, largely due to unsuitable taste. With Premier Star, like the Pacific series, we can tell from initial volumes sent this year, the variety kick off will be almost immediate.

"With more volume we can start to do more things in the market, says Jane. For example, the variety owners and DMP as exclusive marketing agents will fly to Thailand to coincide with first arrivals in 2012 to experience consumer reaction to the variety."

David Brasell said South East Asian markets were quite flat for the first three months of this year but Premier Star was able to fetch an excellent variety average premium.

Jane Quinn was in Hong Kong for Asia Fruit Logistica this September.

Premier Star information was given to a select range of customers with market spread outside of Singapore and Thailand. There is a tendency by Asia importers to want to dominate with exclusive variety rights but this style of supply can work successfully in the right partnerships.

"What we are looking for is a commitment to the market development of the variety in return, for which we will be supportive of faithful partners now and into the future.

**"This in spite of the fact the Chinese market is notoriously fussy and limited with respect to grade specs on Western imported fruit. If we can succeed even for a modest volume" says Jane, "we are talking big dollars".**

"For example two of our Taiwan importers were so taken with the colour and skin quality that they are also keen to trial small volumes into their stalls at the Guangzhou wetmarkets in China. This in spite of the fact the Chinese market is notoriously fussy and limited with respect to grade specs on Western imported fruit. If we can succeed even for a modest volume" says Jane, "we are talking big dollars".

DMP feels Premier Star is also suitable for the Indian market. With its firm skin and texture the variety can handle the currently ill equipped Indian distribution system which lacks quality cool chain services.

Premier Star has its own branding, export carton and in 2012, will have its own PLU label. This is vital to stand out from other apples in the markets and is a strong selling point with retailers. Asian markets, unlike parts of Europe, also love to work with exclusive exporter brands and this enables valid premiums to be obtained.

In New Zealand the bulk of planted out trees are in Nelson with more plantings scheduled for that region in this coming season. Hawke's Bay has also started to plant Premier Star.

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# Premier Star

It's the star attraction



dmp <sup>PREMIER</sup> STAR <sup>PVR</sup>

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