

China - a new market for blackcurrants?



More than 1.3 billion inhabitants - all likely to use any kind of product made of blackcurrants! China, the second biggest economic power of the world, has become a major export market for many countries and all sorts of products. Even if its economic growth has started slowing down over the past five years: let's see what is going on for blackcurrants in China.

China itself is growing blackcurrants (varieties Botrop, Ben Lomond, Han Feng mainly) in the North West (Xinjiang) and North East (Heilongjiang) of the country. China has its own research institute in the university of Jilin. The researchers of this institute were very kind to give us more information about the blackcurrant situation in China.

A limited local production covers 3000 hectares. Here, blackcurrants growing is part of family businesses. Most of the times, people work in small farms without any employees: the size of the blackcurrant fields are less than 1/2 hectare.

The local food industry uses blackcurrants in yogurts, juices or cordials, jams, sweets and blackcurrant wines. Nevertheless, the production is very limited: the Chinese food tradition does not really include the consumption of jams, of example. Finally, it is evident: blackcurrants do not yet delight the Chinese taste buds. The fruit is rather unknown to the biggest part of the population. There is not much promotion of the health benefits of the blackcurrant yet. And this results in a very low demand for our superfruit.

BUT: we keep getting requests for blackcurrants and pomace because of their high anthocyanin content. The deep red colour of blackcurrants (red is a lucky colour for the Chinese) and blackcurrant extracts seem interesting in China.

We therefore have reason to think that this huge country will soon become a market for blackcurrants. As it has already become for wines or other products. Let's keep it in mind!