

# Best of cassis smoothie contest 2017



**There was a hustle and bustle all around the IBA booth during the Smoothie Contest 2017 in Nuits-Saint-Georges. Over 1000 visitors came to taste and evaluate the 8 different smoothies, prepared by food bloggers, smoothie lovers and chefs.**

When the Tour de France 2017 arrived in Nuits-Saint-Georges, 8 professional or

amateur cooks competed their own way. With the help of blenders, they prepared their own version of a blackcurrant smoothie. The spectators who were waiting for the cycle competitors to arrive were the judges. They could taste the 8 different smoothies and elect their favorite beverage. At the end of a busy day, the participants of the first “Best of Cassis” - contest prepared one last big glass of smoothie. But this time, it was for a panel of 3 professionals: a chef, a blackcurrant professional and the manager of a gourmet magazine. A smoothie contest like you have never seen it before!

**Get an idea of the atmosphere of a lovely day in this picture review:**

**The booth in Nuits-Saint-Georges - and great public!**

**Evaluation by the professional panel at the Cassissium**

**Cocktail class for the participants and gifts for everyone**



participants



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**AUSTRIA**  
**JUICE**

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**Nothing could have happened without them: Many thanks to all those who helped us to make this smoothie contest a great success!!!**

As announced previously, the New Product Development Unit of the IBA, a core group of blackcurrant product professionals with the support of Austria Juice, launched this first “Best of Cassis” contest.

Of course, a contest needs competitors. We had limited the number of participants to 8. And found 8 highly motivated smoothie-makers: Karine, Baptiste, Nicole, Léa, Elaine, Chern, Diane and Hubert.

They made their smoothies with 35 liters of blackcurrant concentrate from Austria Juice.

Almost 400 kg of fruits, vegetables and dairy products came from the main sponsor of the Tour de France: Carrefour.

SEB, one of the leading producers of small domestic equipment, offered 8 brand new high speed blenders to the participants.

The Cassissium, the blackcurrant museum by Védrenne in Nuits-Saint-Georges, helped with the location, water, ice cubes, tables, helpers and many more. Finally, help, prizes and gifts came from many: Le Richebourg, Spa Hôtel La Cueillette, Château de Gilly, Le Cassissium, Vinésime, Castel de Très Girard, Nectars de Bourgogne, Mulot&Petitjean, Veuve Ambal, Anis de Flavigny, Moutarderie

Fallot, Nuits-Saint-Georges, Arts & Gastronomie

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**VEUVE AMBAL**  
CRÉMANT DE BOURGOGNE



*Edmond Fallot*  
LA MOUTARDIERE

**Find all the recipes here!**

The “Cheese cake blackcurrant smoothie” by chef Chern has won the professional panel’s prize. Try it yourself!

*If you want to read more about the contest or keep in touch with us for the next*

*one, follow us on our “Best of Cassis” page:*



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# Blackcurrants - what else?

**50 years of blackcurrant growing, development of mechanical harvesting systems, and associative engagement. Blackcurrant growing in Germany without Rolf, Emmi and Michael Bullinger is unimaginable.**



In April this year, I have paid a visit to one of the German blackcurrant growers, Michael Bullinger. All those who have attended our conferences have certainly already met him. He is always present (although discreet), and he was also part of the organizing team of the German conference in Waldenburg in 2013. His farm, “Obsthof Bullinger”, is in Kupfer, not far from Waldenburg. And it is a pure family business: no employees - only passion for blackcurrants.



Entering Kupfer, Obsthof Bullinger  
on the left side

## **Michael Bullinger and “Obsthof Bullinger”**

Michael grows blackcurrants on 70 hectares of mostly rented land, together with 35 hectares of red currants. “The share of blackcurrants is decreasing, whereas I am gradually increasing the red currants. Demand for red currants is getting higher, and the prices are better at the moment”, Michael tells me. We are sitting at a table, drinking blackcurrant juice and having a cup of coffee and a slice of homemade cake. His wife Anemone and his parents Rolf and Emmi are with us - I feel like at home. “We don’t have contracts with our buyers for blackcurrants. During the harvest, we negotiate the prices with a big producer of blackcurrant juice, who always buys a big share of my yield. We have a relationship based on trust: he knows that my currants are fresh and of good quality. I always respect the authorized residue level of plant protection products. This is our way to work with each other.” More than 10 years ago, Michael took over his parents’ farm. He has been trained as an industrial mechanic, but just like his father, he stayed with the family farm. Generation after generation, the Bullingers seem to have a passion for mechanics and love to fiddle about with machines. But their loyalty towards the farm is even stronger.





Blackcurrant field, Bullinger



Rolf, Emmi, Michael & Anemone  
Bullinger



Obsthof Bullinger



Michael opening the gate to his machinery

## **Blackcurrants in Kupfer - How it all started**

Michael's father Rolf confesses that his own passion for mechanics was one of the reasons why he started to grow blackcurrants. "My parents wanted me to take over the farm. But I didn't want to have cattle, so I chose to develop the fruits we already had: mainly apple or pear trees, but also some blackcurrants and strawberries." In the late 1960ies and early 1970ies, the market was favorable for blackcurrants. The growers got a very good price for their fruits - 5 Deutsche Mark per kilo (which would nowadays be worth more than 5 Euro). But they were handpicked! And whoever has already picked blackcurrants by hands can easily understand how fastidious it is - and the price was well justified. Rolf thought about specializing in blackcurrants, and needed to improve the harvest. Therefore, he worked on a machine that could harvest the currants. He built a harvester himself, with an existing chain saw that he adapted for rattling and removing the currants from the bushes.

## **Building up a German blackcurrant Association in the 1980ies**

After his marriage with Emmi, they both specialized on blackcurrants only, and grew them on 75 hectares - which was almost half of the whole German blackcurrant grown surface. There had already been blackcurrant conferences on a European scale since the 1980ies. The German blackcurrant association is, by the way, closely linked to the Bullingers and would probably not exist without them. It was Rolf who created it in 1983.

## **Professional blackcurrant harvesters**

In the same year, Emmi reminds, the Bullingers made a most memorable one-day-trip to Dijon (France) with a Cessna of one of their business partners. “We were told that there was an exhibition of blackcurrant harvesters, and that we should absolutely go there. Of course, it was interesting, but how could we go there? So he took us there with a plane, but we didn’t even know exactly where the exhibition was. Neither did we speak any French. When we arrived at the airport close to Dijon, we took a taxi. It was difficult to make the driver understand what we wanted, and of course, he didn’t know about this exhibition. We drove through the vineyards - and finally saw those harvesters. It was quite an adventure.”



Michael Bullinger and one of his sprayers

## **Machines - more than a hobby for Michael Bullinger**

Nevertheless, when it comes to blackcurrant growing, technical skills are most welcome: Michael has worked on his New Holland harvester. By making some changes, he is able to deliver very clean blackcurrants: no twigs any more with the currants!



Blackcurrant field (Ben Tron),  
Bullinger



spraying blackcurrants



spraying blackcurrants



red currant field (Rowada)

### **A tour of the farm - in cold conditions**

We have finished our coffee, and Michael suggests to have a tour of the farm and his fields. It is quite cold outside for this season - and Michael is worried. The weather forecast predicts two very cold nights for the same evening already - and his currants are in full blossoming. "My yield will be decreased by 90% if we have such a strong night frost.  $-7^{\circ}\text{C}$  will kill the currants."

### **Obsthof Bullinger**

But not only the currants, also apples and pears will freeze - which are Michael's second income: his farm is a collecting point, where he is storing and fermenting the mashes for the production of industrial alcohol. "This has been done here for long years. But this year will be the last time. I want to stop this business and concentrate on my farming. Mashing my currants, which my buyers always fetch with their trucks, will be my focus. I don't sell any blackcurrants for IQF." Moreover, his parents are getting older. Without their help, Michael couldn't face the work on his farm and for the collecting point.



Collecting point for apples & pears



view of the soil around Kupfer

## **Michael Bullinger and his blackcurrant fields**

Michael drives me through his fields, and black or red currants are all around the hilly landscape. The soil is not perfect, as he confesses. The layer of fertile land is not deep, and not all varieties grow well. He had a very bad experience in 2015 with Ben Hope, which completely dried out with the heat - whereas normally, it gives very good results. Michael chooses the varieties according to their sugar and acidity content. But of course, agronomic aspects take over. Variety Tiben doesn't give a good yield, and Michael now decreases the 16 hectares he had

already planted with them.



8 year-old field of Ben Hope, dried in 2015



Flowering field of Tisel

He looks concerned, while walking through his field of flowering Tisel. “They will all freeze tonight”, he declares. “But whatever, that’s how it is. I will have less work in July then - and more time for my machines, hobbies, and of course for my wife and third baby to come”, he smiles. “Next year will be better for my blackcurrants.”



Michael Bullinger looking at his flowering Tisel

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## **Blackcurrant beer - another nice Polish initiative**



**A blackcurrant beer named “SALAMANDER Blackcurrant Berliner Weisse beer”. The inauguration took place in Poland in mid-July and is the outcome of a collaboration between the Polish Blackcurrant Growers Association (KSPCP) and Browar Stu Mostów**



## **brewery.**

*For video “Blackcurrants bring together producers and brewers” please visit <https://youtu.be/bDwgBfc0USA>*

### **Collaboration of Polish brewers and growers**

The joint project brought together the competences of brewers and growers. Both enjoy a strong position: Poland is one of the leaders in the production of berries and one of the leaders of the beer revolution. The brewing market is one of the fastest growing sectors of the Polish economy. With more than 1.500 new beers launched every year in Poland, craft brewing builds the creative capital and strengthens the regional identity. For the first time in Poland, the project joins the forces of a trade organization of producers and a craft brewery. The aim is to promote the potential of collaboration between brewers and growers.



The product launch ceremony was held simultaneously in Wrocław and Lublin. Wrocław is the seat of Browar Stu Mostów. The city hosts the highest number of beer projects and the most important brewing events in Poland. People also call it the “Capital of Good Beer”. Lublin is the capital of the region, responsible for 1/3 of the global production of blackcurrant.

### **Partners**

Collaboration projects and products created in Poland can have a significant effect on the popularity of blackcurrants worldwide. According to the KSPCP, the creativity of Polish brewers can significantly help growers.

*Browar Stu Mostów* is the most international craft brewery in Poland. It was the first one in Poland to make beer together with brewers from the US, Germany and Spain. Among other brands, the brewery promotes its WRCLW Schöps beer,

which is the wheat symbol of Wrocław, ART and Salamander. Beers of all three brands have won medals at the most prestigious competitions in Poland, Europe and the US.

The blackcurrant beer was launched under the Salamander brand. Salamander is an old beer, which emerged at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Wrocław. It shows the power of meeting over a beer, friendship and respect. Up to the present day, during feasts held by German student corporations, they still cultivate and practice this custom. Product-wise, it is of course a new-wave beer.



## What makes the specificity of this blackcurrant beer?



“In addition to the colour, the flavour and the aroma, blackcurrant also adds extra acidity. Beers of this kind are gaining popularity, with the Berliner Weisse style going through a real revival. This is a trend we should take advantage of” claims **Mateusz Gulej**, Chief Brewer of the Browar Stu Mostów brewery. The blackcurrant beer is a very interesting beer. It has a very low gravity, and only bright malts - Pilsner and wheat - have been used. That is what makes the beer so light. The low, almost impalpable bitterness is due to the use of the noble Tettnanger hops. The brewers add the blackcurrants at the late stage of fermentation and aging. Blackcurrants gave the beer its

characteristic flavour and aroma and emphasized its acidic profile even more. The Salamander blackcurrant beer is available at the best multitap pubs and beer stores across Poland and in the Czech Republic, Germany, Austria, Denmark, the Netherlands and Spain.

### **Berliner Weisse - a bit of history**

*The “Berliner Weisse” is a hazy, acidic, wheat style of beer with low alcohol content; a regional, historic beer from Northern Germany, particularly Berlin, where it has been brewed since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century “Berliner Weisse” was the most popular alcoholic beverage in Berlin: 50 different breweries produced it. Today, the number has dropped to just two.*

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## **The visit of the IBA Exec to Poland**

**The IBA Executive (President Anthony Snell, vice-president Jens Holme Pedersen and General Manager Stefanie Sharma) visited the world’s biggest blackcurrant producer: Poland. Their 3-days trip was very nicely organized by Piotr Baryla, the Polish vice-president of the IBA and president of the KSPCP. It allowed a deep insight into the situation for blackcurrants in Poland. A short, but very constructive and busy trip.**

## The scope

When Anthony Snell took over the presidency of the IBA in 2016, he clearly expressed his wish for the IBA to reconcile supply with demand on the global blackcurrant market. As Poland is currently producing more than half of the world's supply, he felt the need to learn more about the Polish production. The tight 3 days schedule included visits of farms, collecting points and processors. Very interesting discussions could take place. Thanks to the support of the KSPCP (the Polish blackcurrant association), SVZ, Weremczuk and Bayer, the cost of the trip could be kept low for the limited IBA funding.

## Blackcurrants in Poland - first impressions



The IBA Exec members and Dr Dorota Jarret from the James Hutton Institute in Dundee met small, medium and big growers all around Lublin. This is the main blackcurrant growing area in Poland. When driving through the countryside, you can see blackcurrant fields all around. Sometimes just a few rows, evidently belonging to a small farm nearby. Sometimes huge fields of several hectares. Of course, there are not only blackcurrants. Lublin is an area where you can find all kinds of fruits: cherries, raspberries, red currants, strawberries, apples, gooseberries, blackberries - there is no end to the list. Not to forget the vegetables and any other farming product.



raspberry plantation



gooseberry plantation



blackcurrant plantation

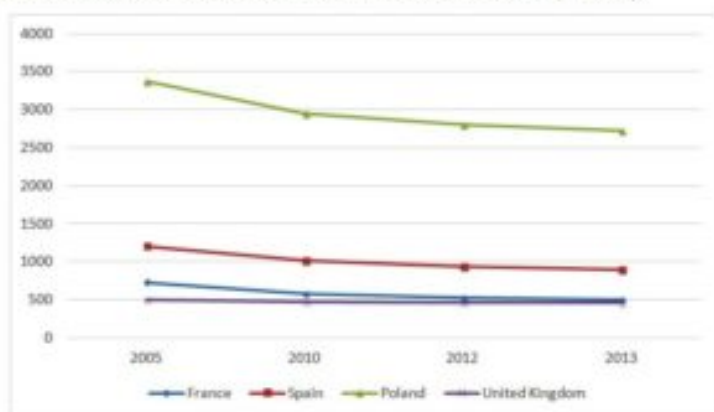
## **Agriculture in Poland**

Compared to other European countries, the population economically active in agriculture in Poland is very high. This is already the starting point of the Polish specificity among the other blackcurrant growing countries: Poland's population of roughly 38.5 million inhabitants is still very attached to agriculture. Almost 40% live in rural areas, and 6% of the total population is employed in agriculture (2.3 million people). But this number doesn't take into account all the people who have their main occupation - and who have some fields and practice agriculture in

their “leisure” time.

In 2014, according to the GUS (Central Statistical Office of Poland), about 52 percent of the private farms were smaller than five hectares. Of the remaining farms, 22 percent were between five and ten hectares and 11 percent were between ten and fifteen hectares. Only 14 percent of private farms were larger than fifteen hectares. It is interesting to note that this distribution has only slightly changed since 1987.

ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE POPULATION IN AGRICULTURE (in thous.)



## A long visit in a few Pictures



small blackcurrant field of a non professional grower



Jens Pedersen and Anthony Snell  
evaluating a blackcurrant field



well entertained blackcurrant field



spring frost affected 2017  
yield



row of blackcurrants as a fence in  
front of a house

Talks with a farmer and manager of a collecting point  
(on the right)



“Our break-even point is of 1.5  
zloty/kg over 6 years.”





Andrzej Szwaczyna from SVZ,  
showing one of his farmers'  
blackcurrant bushes

Dr Dorota Jarret in talks with a KSPCP grower,  
together with journalists from “Jagodnik” and “Plantpress”



talks with a young grower (non

KSPCP member) in a field of Tisel



“My best yield of Tisel was in 2015, when I got 21t/ha. Normally, it gives 16t.”



Evaluation of spring  
frost damages

Independent blackcurrant grower



“Before Poland entered the EU, prices were better for blackcurrants.”



visit of one of the private farms



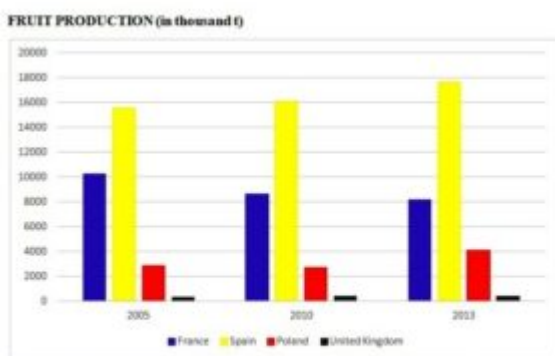
Anthony Snell interested in the machinery of one of

the farmers

## Growing blackcurrants in Poland

Our visits led us only on private farms, some of them belonging to members of the KSPCP (the Polish blackcurrant association), some to non members. Actually, it is important to remind that Poland produces around 130.000 tonnes of blackcurrants, for a global blackcurrant market of an estimated volume of 600.000 tonnes annually (according to the IERIGZ - The Institute of Agricultural and Food Economics). Russia is the global leader in terms of blackcurrant production volume, however it mainly produces for its own market. Therefore, the production of blackcurrants in Poland is currently the highest for the global market.

### Comparison of Europe's largest fruit producers



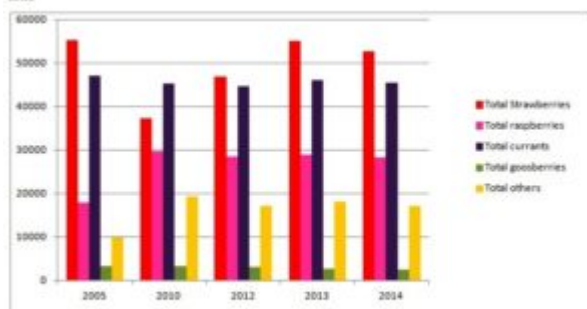
Whereas fruit production is stable in the UK, it decreases in France. It keeps increasing in Spain and Poland.

Source: GUS Statistical Yearbook of Agriculture 2015

### Berry plantations in Poland

#### CULTIVATED AREA OF BERRY PLANTATIONS

in ha



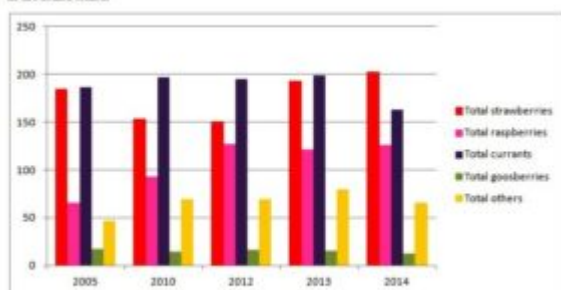
Until 2014, currants (red and black currants) had the second highest ground of cultivated areas. The cultivation of currants is obviously of a great importance in Poland.

Source: GUS Statistical Yearbook of Agriculture 2015

## Berry production in Poland

#### PRODUCTION OF BERRY FRUITS AND HAZELNUTS

in thousand tonnes



Currants have the highest production level (except 2014).

Source: GUS Statistical Yearbook of Agriculture 2015

Keeping these figures in mind, the producers who are members of the KSPCP are only few: around 50. And they do not even produce 10% of all the blackcurrants in Poland. As mentioned above, half of all farms are smaller than 5 hectares – but they account for a huge amount of the agricultural production in Poland. The production of more than 70% of all blackcurrants in Poland is therefore mostly uncontrolled and impossible to cover statistically.



Piotr Baryla with his son Michal and Miroslaw Korzeniowski (Bayer)

Piotr Baryla, Vice President of the IBA and President of the KSPCP keeps reminding that it is important to ally forces in order to be stronger. His association is working hard for the promotion of blackcurrants, the creation of new products, and of course the sharing of information. “Sustainable blackcurrant growing is one of the major challenges of the coming years. We work closely together with Bayer for this. But most of the growers in Poland are mainly interested in prices. And as long as we don’t have the majority of the Polish blackcurrant growers in our association, we have no strength. Making contracts with the processors and guaranteeing sales of the currants of our members for a good price is what we work on.”

### **Big players and KSPCP members**



Wieslaw Blocki, sharing experiences with another KSPCP member



Wiesław Blocki talking with Michał Piątek  
(magazine “Jagodnik”)

The situation for the numerous small growers is, of course, totally different from big growers, like the Blockis. Those who have attended the 2014 conference in Poland know them well, and have even visited their farm: they work together with seven other big growers for selling their currants. And they farm a total of 800 hectares of blackcurrants.

Of course, they try to sell their fruits under contracts, and are able to produce certificates. Although this is a proof of quality for their production, these certifications are now considered standard on the global blackcurrant market. But in comparison with products from the small farmers, they still justify higher prices. Traceability is more and more important.

## **Processing blackcurrants in Poland**



from l. to r.: Piotr Podoba (Döhler),

Jens Pedersen, Stefanie Sharma,  
Anthony Snell



Döhler plant in Mogielnica

Our visit to one of the 4 major processing plants in Poland belonging to Döhler confirmed this: the 32 professional juice concentrate processors in Poland look for traceability of their raw material. They can get it from the members of the KSPCP and a few independent big growers.

But the requirements of course depend on the requirements of their own customers - who mainly look for good prices.



Collection point



## **Situation for small growers**

The small growers bring their currants to collecting points. These collecting points belong to private farms, the owners of the farms are in charge of their administration. As far as the infrastructure is concerned, the European Union has financed a huge part of it over the past fifteen years.

We could therefore see very nice facilities, very modern and perfectly equipped. Some of them directly process the fruits in freezing tunnels for IQF. One of the collection points we have visited collects between 80 and 100 tonnes of blackcurrants per day during the harvest - which amounts to a total of over 2.000 tonnes over the whole harvesting period! These blackcurrants come from around 200 growers.



grower arriving at a collection point

Now, there is of course not just one collecting point in whole Poland - but one or two per fruit growing village. In total, there may be between 3.000 and 4.000 collecting points for blackcurrants in whole Poland, of different sizes. The KSPCP estimates the total number of blackcurrant growers in Poland at 15.000. Given these figures, everybody can easily understand how difficult it is to give a clear and complete view of the situation.

## Harvesting blackcurrants in Poland

If there are still some ignorant people who think that farmers in Poland pick their blackcurrants by hands, they will be surprised. Most of the blackcurrant growers in Poland, even those who have less than 5 ha, have their harvester. Weremczuk, one of the main manufacturers of harvesting machines, has its headquarter not far from Lublin. We therefore had a short visit to their production unit. In fact, since the origin of the company, their business changed from the manufacturing of mainly blackcurrant harvesters to harvesters for almost every fruit. Robert Weremczuk told us that today, he can see big growers reducing their blackcurrant production.



The Weremczuk headquarter in Niedzwica Duza



ready to sell machinery



Robert Weremczuk proudly showing rewards



a Weremczuk blackcurrant harvester

### **3 days to evaluate the situation: is it enough?**

Of course, no one can get a clear view and learn everything about blackcurrants in Poland in only 3 days. Yet, thanks to a nice organization of the trip and thanks to all the people involved in the visit, we could understand a lot. And we can only

encourage everyone who wants to know more about the Polish position in blackcurrant growing to have a look at his or her own. Within a few visits (and the Polish farmers will give a warm welcome!), it is easily understandable:

There is a long lasting tradition of growing, processing and consuming blackcurrants in Poland. Agriculture in general is still very important for a majority of the population. Machinery and knowledge about plant protection, variety research and growing methods are there. Many big farmers perfectly know what they do and produce fruit of very good quality. On the other hand, there are thousands of small farmers who more or less respect modern growing methods. They continue to produce a huge part of the agricultural output.

### **Want to know more?**

Will the production in Poland increase or decrease in the coming years? Will the processing industry put more pressure on the farmers for the quality of their fruits? At the IBA conference 2018, Anthony Snell will further speak about his thoughts on the Polish industry and its effect on world production and prices.

In the meantime, if you want to read more about the trip, please check out the articles from the two journalists of Jagodnik and Plantpress who came along with the IBA representatives, on <http://www.blackcurrant-iba.com/press/media-releases/>



*(picture taken after the interview with press)*

*from l. to r. Stefanie Sharma (General Manager IBA), Anthony Snell (President IBA), Dr. Dorota Jarret (Fruit Breeder, James Hutton Institute), Jens Pedersen (Vice-President IBA)*