

Rijk Zwaan, Nongsan trading team up to build premium sweet palermo pepper market in Korea

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The partners are positioning the high-sugar pointed pepper as a premium snack vegetable, combining breeding technology, stable production and consumer-focused marketing to drive category growth



Rijk Zwaan and Nongsan Trading are deepening their long-standing partnership to expand the market for Sweet Palermo pointed peppers in South Korea, betting on growing consumer demand for premium, flavourful and convenient fresh produce.

The collaboration comes as Korean consumers increasingly seek healthier foods that combine convenience with quality and distinctive taste. Against this backdrop, the partners are positioning Sweet Palermo not simply as another sweet pepper variety, but as a premium snack-oriented produce concept designed to create new value across the fresh-food supply chain.

Nongsan Trading, described as Korea's largest sweet pepper company, identified an opportunity to respond to growing interest in premium peppers with stronger sweetness, versatility and differentiated eating experiences. The company selected Sweet Palermo based on the variety's combination of uniformity, high sugar content and distinctive flavour profile, supported by Rijk Zwaan's breeding capabilities and technical expertise.

Sweet Palermo is characterised by stable yields, disease resistance and adaptability, attributes that can support more predictable production and supply. Greater production reliability is particularly important when developing a premium produce category where retailers and consumers expect consistent quality.

The companies are also using branding and marketing to reshape how peppers are presented to consumers. Rather than positioning the product solely as a conventional vegetable, Sweet Palermo is being promoted as a premium, sweet and snackable produce item with distinctive colours, a strong brand identity and broad culinary applications.

The strategy is designed to create benefits throughout the value chain. Growers can gain from stronger and more consistent demand, while retailers can use a differentiated premium product to attract customers, support higher-value sales and encourage repeat purchases. Foodservice operators, meanwhile, gain access to a distinctive ingredient that can be used across a wide range of dishes.

Consumer engagement has become a central part of the partnership. Rijk Zwaan and Nongsan Trading have collaborated on co-branded promotional campaigns, digital marketing, in-store activations and tasting events at major supermarkets to

introduce the product directly to Korean consumers.

The early market response has been encouraging. According to Nongsan Trading, consumers have responded positively to Sweet Palermo's crisp texture, natural sweetness and thin skin. Product tastings have also helped generate immediate trial purchases and contributed to repeat sales, suggesting that the product's sensory attributes are supporting its premium positioning.

The partnership builds on the companies' earlier collaboration in Korea, including the launch of the Silky Pink brand in the snack tomato segment. That experience has given the companies a platform from which to explore additional premium produce concepts in a market where consumer preferences are evolving rapidly.

Jongkwan Park, General Manager of Nongsan Trading, said Rijk Zwaan's breeding technology, focus on quality and technical support, together with Sweet Palermo's product characteristics, made the variety a strong fit for the company's premium portfolio. He added that the companies see opportunities to develop a broader ecosystem around the product involving growers, retailers and foodservice businesses.

Young Han, Managing Director of Rijk Zwaan South Korea, said successful category development depends on collaboration throughout the value chain. By combining Rijk Zwaan's varieties, global brand capabilities and industry network with Nongsan Trading's market expertise, the companies aim to accelerate the development of Korea's premium snack vegetable segment.

The partners also plan to use industry events such as Asia Fruit Logistica to showcase Sweet Palermo and engage with retailers, growers and other produce professionals. Such platforms provide an opportunity to demonstrate the product's positioning while gathering insights into emerging consumer and fresh-produce trends across Asia.

For Rijk Zwaan and Nongsan Trading, the Sweet Palermo initiative represents a broader strategy of creating value through the combination of genetics, production expertise, branding and consumer engagement. As demand for differentiated and convenient fresh produce continues to grow, the partners are positioning premium snack vegetables as an emerging category within Korea's evolving produce market.