



J.O. SIMS L^{td}
Est. 1896

the grapevine

Innovation, Quality & Reliability

Why these principles, plus product expertise, strong relationships, cutting edge technology and an ethical approach, are essential for success in today's fruit business.

In this issue of The Grapevine you will find many references to how sophisticated our business has become in recent years in order to keep ahead of demand, and meet the challenging requirements of the modern market.

Increasingly we source fruit from around the World to provide availability 12 months of the year. This brings environmental issues to the fore as we endeavour to reduce the impact of global trade. You'll find articles on our initiatives using sea freight, sourcing fruit closer to home and our responsible approach to packaging as well as our commitment to supplying quality Organic products.

You'll also read about how today's fruit business requires a level of technical support that it would have been hard to imagine 20 years ago. Food safety, quality and value remain of paramount importance, but it is the sheer scale of demand for an increasingly wide variety of fruit, that has introduced a raft of logistical issues, which we have to manage on a daily basis.

Consequently, departments such as Operations, Finance and IT have become as important to the company as the business of buying and selling. In addition, we have created a new department that focuses solely on new product

procurement. This team sources "new" fruit and new suppliers and helps us provide a reliable supply of products for the fresh, processor and ingredient market sectors. All of these departments are featured in this issue.

But as some things change, others remain the same. Part of our strength as one of the UK's leading fruit suppliers is derived from the relationships we have built over the years. Contained in the following pages are articles about some of the people who have been with JO Sims the longest, our continued commitment to UK Wholesale Markets and our long standing

associations with suppliers overseas. To succeed in our business requires a long term approach to cope with the vagaries of climate and changes in demand. In a changing and growing market we offer stability that gives our suppliers the confidence to invest in a particular product, and provides our customers with a reliable source of high quality fruit.

On which note; also look out for stories on new Organic dried snacks, the rise in popularity of Canadian Wild Blueberries as a healthy ingredient, and filling the supply gap with Indian Grapes.

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Office Expansion

Long term the goal is for a paperless office, short term the plan was just to move everyone in without any hitches or complaints, and so far... so good.

"As our numbers have continued to swell in recent years it was inevitable that we would need more space," says Office Manager, Rachael Taylor. "Following the early completion of phase one of our office development, which has almost doubled the available floor space, the general consensus is that people are enjoying the tidier and brighter environment, which is a relief!" Well done to Site & Engineering Manager, Don Fletcher Smith who has done a great job, as have all of those involved including outside contractors. Phase two is ahead of schedule and will increase meeting space and enhance our reception area. See the next issue of The Grapevine for the full story....

A Greener Outlook

JO Sims has undertaken a series of initiatives to reduce the environmental impact of its business.

As the leading supplier of cherries in the UK, any reduction we make on the environmental impact of growing, transporting and packing the fruit, is likely to have a significant benefit.

We are already one of the largest producers of Organic cherries in the World and are looking to add further environmental benefits by using more sea freight versus airfreight to bring fruit into the UK. In addition we are increasingly sourcing product closer to home, reducing the amount of packaging we use, switching to cornstarch based punnets and using recycled materials where possible.

The market for cherries in the UK is such that we have to import the fruit from a wide variety of countries in order to meet demand. In effect we follow the cherry season around the globe so that they are now available 35 weeks of the year. Traditionally that meant using airfreight to get the fruit here in 3 to 4 days. In contrast, sea freight takes up to 3 weeks, but by using refrigerated containers and



modified atmosphere bags, we are able to extend the life of the fruit to allow for the longer journey time.

Using sea freight has other advantages in addition to the environmental benefit; it requires less handling of the fruit, which means there is less damage, less waste and improved product quality.

At the beginning of the season airfreight will still be needed to get fruit here quickly to meet early demand, but wherever possible we will always transport product on passenger flights rather than specially chartered commercial flights. In fact 95% of the cherries we fly into

the UK are transported on passenger flights.

We are increasingly sourcing fruit closer to home to reduce the amount of transportation required. The fruit can arrive just as quickly by truck as it would do were it flown in from halfway around the World.

Regarding packaging, we are reducing the amount of labels on packs so that one label will carry all the information previously shown on as many as three. So we use less materials and less energy. In addition we are replacing difficult to recycle

materials by using cornstarch based punnets instead. We are also using bags made from cornstarch to pack our grapes.

In order to comply with food safety and packaging regulations we are able to make use of recycled materials by sandwiching them between outer layers of virgin material. The end product is about 80% recycled so it's a worthwhile exercise.

With creative thinking and the best use of available technology we will continue to develop new ways of reducing the environmental impact of our business.

What's New in Procurement?

Benefits to customers and suppliers from the department that's always in search of something new.

Be it for a new fruit or a new producer; worldwide competition for good supply sources is fierce.

"We offer our customers and suppliers huge advantages in bringing new products to market," says Procurement Director, Darren Matschull. "We have people based overseas to provide fast and reliable information first hand. We know what it takes to turn a hypothetical product opportunity into a sustainable reality. We take a long term view in developing trading partnerships. We offer suppliers the added security of three routes to market via the fresh, processed and ingredients' sectors."

With Steve Pauly in the USA, Carolina Marques Galhardo in Brazil and Preetam Chandratreya in India; we have three very experienced people on the ground able to look for new products and suppliers and help to manage existing business. "They're our eyes and ears locally," says Darren. "They carry out initial audits, begin price negotiations and arrange samples before we send a team over from the UK or arrange a customer visit. Subsequently they can monitor QC and ensure

packaging is to specification. Their presence gives us, and therefore our customers, a lot more control, not least because they provide complete and accurate information regarding all issues of availability and supply."

Paul Tomlinson is the fifth member of the team, based in the UK but with a roving brief to respond to new opportunities wherever they may present themselves around the world. "It might be a sound bite on television, or a customer request, or something we look at on our own initiative; but whatever the inspiration, we invest a lot of time looking at "new" fruits, particularly with so much consumer interest on super foods," says Paul. "We need to find out quickly if something is safe, commercially viable and reliable. And the same principles apply if we are looking for new suppliers of existing products."

For JO Sims and our customers the goal is to provide fruit 52 weeks of the year for fresh and processor sales, which means we follow

the growing seasons around the world in an effort to build 12 months of uninterrupted supply. For Paul Tomlinson that means trips near and far visiting farms and overseas cooperatives to find quality product and reliable sources. "And increasingly sources closer to home," says Paul, "as we seek to reduce the amount of food miles involved."

From the growers' perspective, security is key if they are to invest in the land and in a particular product. "Our suppliers might work an entire year for a one month harvest," says Paul, "So they need to feel secure that we will provide a market for their crop. Having such a strong presence in fresh, processor and ingredient sectors means we offer more sales opportunities than our competitors. Also, as a family business we are able to take a long term view and adopt a very collaborative approach. It suits both ourselves and our suppliers that we are both looking for a commitment from one another."

Part of the Procurement Department's brief is to source "new" fruits such as the exciting and healthy eating Borojo from South America.



Wild, Healthy & Blue

Our Ingredients Department highlights the growing popularity of Canadian Wild Blueberries.

Health benefits continue to drive the ingredients market forward, according to Ingredients General Manager, Doug Mackay. "We've seen increased demand across the board for cranberry and blueberry products based on the antioxidant platform. A few years ago you would have thought that these were two relatively stable sectors, but consumer focus on health and the superfoods concept has given a wide variety of berry products a new lease of life as ingredients."

For example the health dividend has seen the market for Canadian Wild Blueberries grow threefold in the UK over the past 5 years.

Part of their appeal is that they are higher in anthocyanins than any other fruit or vegetable (including even cultivated blueberries) and so deliver more of the antioxidant power that could help fight cancer, heart disease and the effects of ageing.

"We are the leading supplier of Canadian Wild Blueberries in the UK," says Doug. "They only grow in the glacial soils of Atlantic



Canada and Quebec, which fits perfectly with how consumers increasingly perceive better quality in foods of provenance. Another angle to the story is that they are grown in circumstances that maintain the biodiversity of their ecosystem, so they have a very positive image. And of course they taste great too, which is why we have seen their increasing use as ingredients in cereals, snack bars, juices, smoothies

and baked goods."

Canadian Wild Blueberries are easy to use and maintain their taste, shape, texture and deep blue colour during processing. They are available in a variety of formats to suit manufacturers requirements including individually quick frozen, canned, dehydrated and sugar infused. They are also available in puree, concentrate and powdered formats.

Wholesale Changes

Steve Knight stresses the importance of quality, reliability & expertise in the bustling wholesale sector.

Throughout the UK and Ireland we are a major supplier to the regional wholesale markets that provide fresh fruit and vegetables for independent retailers, restaurants and the foodservice sector. "The wholesale markets are a vibrant part of the fruit business," says Wholesale Sales Executive, Steve Knight. "They provide enormous variety, often something quite different to the mainstream, selling fresh produce from almost every country in the world."

The markets mostly operate between midnight and midday. "There is a lot more variety available than there used to be, and customers tend to specialise in particular categories, so they really know their fruit," says Steve. "We deliver to the markets daily, and have built our reputation on product expertise, quality and reliability. We've

been working with the same customers for many years and they rely on us not to let them down."

The past two decades have seen enormous change in the UK fruit industry, with the growth of the supermarket, processor and ingredients sectors. But the wholesale markets have always been at the heart of our business, from as far back as 1896, when Josiah Oliver Sims began trading in Pudding Lane. "Elsewhere in this issue of the Grapevine you can read about the latest developments at JO Sims," says Steve. "You'll find details of how we continue to develop the business to meet the challenging demands of the modern market, all of which will be of benefit to how we serve our wholesale customers."

What Makes The World Go Round?

Introducing the team who make sure everything runs smoothly...



At JO Sims the Finance Team is more closely involved in commercial activities than is perhaps typical in other parts of the food industry. This is largely because getting fruit from a farm to a fruit bowl is an extremely complicated business.

"To start with we deal with a broad range of customers, from the major Supermarkets, through manufacturers and processors, to wholesale market traders," explains Finance Director, Andrew Bell. "Galina Harding does an excellent job in credit control and works closely with our sales team to provide the flexible approach we need to manage such a variety of customers."

"Karen Ingram has joined us recently and looks after the charging of costs onto fruit consignments. Each consignment or lot as it is referred to, is a discrete accounting parcel against which costs and revenues are recorded. This is highly complex due to the nature of the costs that are incurred in procuring and

moving fruit to a customer location. Typically there may be up to 15 different charge types for one transaction, all of which must be accurately controlled. The interaction with the buying team is constant, ensuring that management information is accurately maintained."

"Sue Matthews is our payments controller, and as with any international business, she manages a multi-currency cash position. So, for a variety of reasons each member of the team has to have a very outward looking approach to their work, be it concerning customer variety, supply complexity or exchange rate variability."

The Finance Team also includes Company Secretary, Bernard Davies who is responsible for the general ledger, financial controls, operational expenses and the company's pension funds.

20 Years with JO Sims

First hand experiences charting a technological revolution in the fruit business!

There is no better representation of our expertise in fruit, than from the experience of four people who have been with JO Sims over the past 20 years. Bernard Davies, Amry Jones, Darren Matschull and Beverley Thompson have seen a lot of changes both inside and outside the business in their time with the company:

"When I started out in sales we had to write orders in ticket books," said Procurement Director, Darren Matschull. "Each book had 50 tickets and if you filled a book in a day, then you had been busy. The technology was pretty basic, just a telex machine really, otherwise everything was handwritten."

"As I recall we only had one computer screen prior to 1990," said Company Secretary, Bernard Davies. "Stock was written on large blackboards and once a week details of trading were cleared down onto the computer. As our involvement with the supermarkets has grown, our systems have changed accordingly."

"My first job was IT support," says Wholesale Sales Manager



The fruit business has developed more in the past 20 years than it did in the previous 60! Since we opened our auction rooms in Borough Market in the 1930's, the fruit business has never seen more change than over the past two decades.

Beverley Thompson. "Part of my responsibility was to write up the sales tickets onto the system. Later on I moved into wholesale sales where I was one of the first female traders. I still have a lot of the same customers as I did then and I'm happy to say I've never once been sworn at. I'd like to think that's because of the good relationships we develop as a business and not just because I'm a woman!"

"We have become a lot more specialist in the years since I joined

the company," said Processor Sales Manager, Amry Jones. "I began trading exotics such as prickly pears, pomegranates, guava, custard apples and even sweet potatoes and yams. Nowadays we focus on fewer areas because you really have to live and breathe a product to be able to work with the different varieties, different seasons and different sources. To meet the demand from supermarkets and foodservice providers, which have both grown enormously over the past 20 years; it pays to be specialists."

New Organic Snacks

Why Organic dried snacks were hard to find... until now!

JO Sims has launched the first products in a range of organic dried fruit snacks that are unique in the market. "There is very little organic dried fruit available in the UK," says Sales Director, Rick Kitchen. "This might seem surprising given the popularity of organic fresh fruit, but the reason is because not all fruit varieties are suited to being dried. So just because a particular type of organic fruit makes an excellent fresh product, doesn't mean that the same fruit will deliver the right quality when presented in a dried format."

The first organic dried fruit snacks available from JO Sims are organic apricot, organic berry mix and organic mango.

"Dried fruit has moved from the bakery aisle, to the produce aisle where it sits alongside other snack products with a healthy image such as nuts and seeds," says Rick. "As dried fruit becomes increasingly associated with snacking it will increasingly compete with a broader range of snacks and confectionery. The health angle will be quite compelling, particularly

in association with the appeal of an organic product."

"In addition to retail sales, we also believe these products have excellent potential via foodservice channels, such as airlines, coffee shops and health bars." The range will be extended as other organic fruit varieties are found which meet consumer expectations

for taste and texture when dried. Products are available in shapes and sizes to suit specific customer requirements.

"We shall also be launching Fairtrade dried fruit snacks in the near future, with mango and pineapple likely to be the first products in the range, so watch this space," says Rick.



New People

Welcome to four new faces at JO Sims...



Janet Iveson (pictured top left) has joined our ingredients' sales team having started her career with Dairy Crest & Unigate. Janet is a qualified food technologist and has particular experience in the fruit juice sector.

Andrew Cooknell (pictured bottom left) has also joined our ingredients' sales team having begun his career in retail with the Co-op before moving into food ingredients with Confoco and then JL Priestly & Co.

Peter Brazil (pictured top right)

has joined us as Sales Manager from Fesa UK having worked for Capespan before that. Peter manages our product portfolio for major customers, organising promotions and seasonal plans as well as handling day to day liaison.

Karen Ingram (pictured bottom right) has joined our accounts team. Most of her responsibilities concern our core fruit business, but Karen also has specialist skills relevant to our property interests having joined us from property management company King Sturge.

Market Leaders For Indian Grapes

We celebrate 15 years of business with Indian growers.

JO Sims is the largest importer of Indian grapes in Europe, supplying the UK, Germany, Scandinavia and Russia during April and May each

year; filling the gap as the Chilean season draws to a close, until the Egyptian and Israeli seasons begin. Managing Director, Christopher

Sims has just returned from a two week tour of India, where he presented commemorative plaques to companies with whom we have been doing business since we first began trading in the region 15 years ago.

“Not only have we been working with many of the same companies for 15 years,” said Christopher, “but many of the people are the same too, which is part of the reason we have been able to build such good relationships over the years.”

“We visit the different growing regions in India to meet with our suppliers twice a year,” said Christopher. “Although we have a day to day presence with our representatives Preetam Chandratreya and Jaiprakash Gaidhani, regular visits to and from the UK help to maintain a close working relationship.”



Christopher Sims presents a commemorative plaque to Manik Patil (centre) and Ashok Gaikwad (right) both of ND Grapes, Nashik, India. “JO Sims has championed the market for Indian Grapes across Europe, and we are proud to have been associated with them for the past 15 years.” Said Mr Gaikwad who is also Chairman of the Grape Growers Association of India (Nashik Division).

Operations Update

New people, employment practices, equipment and systems, as we continue to grow and build for the future.



People

Operations Manager, Phil Davies and Pack House Manager Fina Sanderson have recruited 3 Production Supervisors to strengthen the production team. Peter Woods, Leanne Chapman and John Mowatt bring considerable production experience to the business and will help us integrate the skilled workforce who will be recruited on annual contracts from now on.

“Ours is a seasonal business,” says Operations Director, Darren Crook, “so it is typical within the industry to use agency staff. But we have decided to retain key skills within the company by offering skilled workers annualised contracted hours, which will also provide extra job security.”

Systems

JO Sims is the first UK fruit company to use a multi-head weigher in its pack house. The new machine is more efficient, provides increased productivity and, through average weight packing, ensures less waste.

In addition we are introducing a fully computerised system for the pack house, which will provide live stock control and will be integrated with a similar office based system already in operation. “It’s a far cry from the days of tickets and black boards of years gone by,” says Darren. “The new system will improve accuracy and efficiency, increase traceability and allow for greater analysis of the production process.”

A Day At The Races

As part of our celebration to commemorate importing Indian grapes for the past 15 years, we invited a number of guests involved in the Indian grape business to

Thruxton racing circuit on 6th May to see the latest stage of the British Touring Car Championship and to watch Alexander Sims race in the Formula Renault event.

Tyre trouble meant it wasn't the best day for Alexander, but with 10 races to watch there was plenty of entertainment for our guests from India, Germany, China and the UK.



If you would like more information about any of the articles in The Grapevine, or about J.O Sims, please telephone 01775 842 100 or visit www.josims.com

Knowledge Is Power

Whether it's our computer network, Skype system, numerous Blackberries or EDI for the supermarkets; technical support is under the stewardship of IT Manager, Andrew Lyon (pictured top right) and his assistant Tunde Anderson (pictured bottom right). "It's hard to imagine that as recently as 20 years ago the business only used a single computer," says Andrew. "Nowadays we use Prophet software, which is crucial to managing the large number of complex transactions that we handle every day."

"The system is tailored to suit our requirements," says Andrew. "It enables us to prepare bespoke reports with up to the minute



data as required, which helps with planning and forecasts. Shortly we will integrate it with pack house activity, using handheld scanners for total stock control and improved traceability."



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