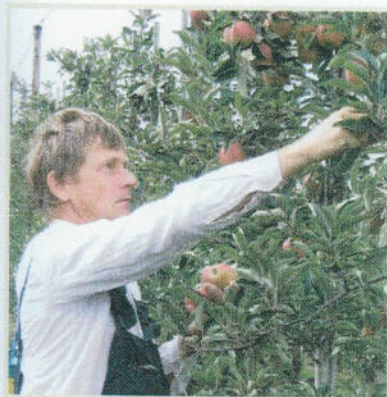


# Switzerland & Austria



## Swiss quality unlocks markets

The Alpine country continues to develop its production and marketing with a firm focus on high-end, premium markets throughout Europe

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**Switzerland's fresh produce export operators are preparing for another major push at this year's Fruit Logistica as the country bids to establish even closer ties with high-end markets across Europe. With organic production continuing to expand across the country and a possible free trade agreement with the European Union currently up for discussion, the prospects for increasing exports look extremely positive.**

According to Rolf Matter, spokesman for the Swiss Fruit Association, the Swiss fruit and vegetable export industry has been concentrating its efforts on targeting high-end markets and affluent consumers with premium quality products. A good example of this, says Mr Matter, lies in the country's apple export basket. "For many years, the big-sized fruits like Golden Delicious have formed the largest part of our exports," he says. "These are exported

to France under the Golden Victor brand. In addition, new local breeding such as RubINETTE, Maigold, Mairac and Diwa (well known under the name Junami) have fared well at an international level."

Maraic, a new cultivar officially launched towards the end of last year, is one of the fastest-growing new apple varieties in Switzerland. According to statistics published in 2008 by the Swiss Ministry of Agriculture, the variety now accounts for some 36ha of production in the country, following initial plantings in 2003.

Michael Weber, managing director of VariCom, which manages the licensing of Maraic as a registered trademark, says he feels this figure has the potential to double in the near future. "The marketing campaign was very successful in 2008, with the variety especially well received among the middle-aged generation as well as children and British ex-pats," Mr Weber reveals. "High sugar levels of 13-16° brix in combination with high fruit acidity make the fruit a full-bodied, tasty apple which is crunchy and juicy but not rock hard. Of increasing importance, and highly

appreciated by consumers, is its excellent shelf-life under ambient temperatures."

With production concentrated along the Alps – from Styria in Austria and Slovenia through Italy's Vinschgau Valley, Lake Constance in Switzerland and west towards the Loire Valley in France – a group of five Swiss packers are coordinating Maraic's introduction through leading retailers such as Migros, Coop and Manor. After harvesting and storage, the apple is ready for consumption in early spring, but has the potential to be stored until June and July while retaining its quality characteristics.

Switzerland's major growing and trading associations, including the Swiss Fruit Association and trade group Swisscofel, will join together at this year's Fruit Logistica under one stand, showcasing the latest and best in premium Swiss produce marketed under the Suisse Garantie brand of origin. "We hope to achieve improved business relations at Fruit Logistica 2009 and to improve knowledge of Swiss quality production and its products abroad," concludes Mr Matter. ■

