



Agriculture & Horticulture
DEVELOPMENT BOARD



New Project

SF 134

The performance of new June-bearing strawberry varieties and advanced selections in raised soil beds

Project Number: SF 134

Project Title: The performance of new June-bearing strawberry varieties and advanced selections in raised soil beds

Project Leader: Sarah Troop

Contractor: Meiosis Limited

Industry Representative: Stephen McGuffie
New Farm Produce Ltd

Start Date: 01 April 2012

End Date: 30 September 2014

Project Cost (total project cost): £31,270 (£32,270)

Project Summary:

The project is designed to bring together for comparison purposes the most interesting new June-bearer strawberry varieties and advanced selections from UK and overseas breeding programmes in order to assess their performance when grown under the same conditions on a commercial site in a central location in the UK.

The growing system for this comparison will be protected sterilised raised bed soil production representative of the standard industry best practice. The entries will ideally be of one plant type, namely tray plants, of a consistent size and quality, included in the trial will be the industry standard, Elsanta, for comparison purposes.

The replicated trial will be planted in early spring 2013 and cropped over a two-year period with fruit yield, fruit quality, shelf life, seasonality, plant habit and disease/pest susceptibility recorded to determine whether any of the entries may offer UK growers an advantage over the varieties currently grown. Retailers will also be invited to sample the fruit and give their opinion of the market suitability of each variety included in the project.

Aims & Objectives:

(i) Project aim(s): To identify new strawberry varieties and near-market selections that have clear potential for profitable commercial production in the UK in the most widely used production system, raised bed soil production.

(ii) Project objective(s): The initial four specific objectives are to compare and evaluate new varieties and advanced selections against the industry standard for the following characteristics:

1. Fruit yield
2. Fruit quality
3. Shelf life
4. Pest and disease susceptibility

The fifth objective is to communicate the findings to the industry in the most effective ways.

Benefits to industry

The industry will benefit from the project by learning whether there are new varieties and/or advanced selections that can be shown, under UK conditions, to produce improved profitability through producing higher Class 1 yields, better fruit size and quality, enhanced shelf life, season extension and/or better disease/pest tolerances than the existing varieties currently grown in the UK.

A variety or selection that shows promise will be highlighted to the industry, which should encourage uptake by propagators and retailers so providing a wider choice of varieties to growers. It will also serve to increase the opportunity a grower has to select a variety that best suits their growing conditions and market outlets. Those varieties that do not show promise can then be eliminated so that focus is directed to the most promising varieties.

Growing newly released varieties is always a challenge for a grower as there is usually little agronomic information available about a new release, therefore demonstrating that a new variety can be grown successfully under a UK commercial raised bed system can reduce the risk a grower takes when deciding to grow a new variety for the first time. By including in the project only those varieties and selections that are near-market or newly released, the industry can make use of the project results immediately, as it is likely that plants will already be available albeit in small quantities.

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