

# Namibian blueberries go global

The quality of the fruit harvested so far has been exceptional and is destined for local and

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ELLANIE SMIT

WINDHOEK

A few years ago, no one would have dreamt that one could grow high-quality blueberries in a country as dry as Namibia.

However, in July, Mashare Berries (Pty) Ltd managed to do just that, producing the first largescale commercial harvest of the fruit in the

A total harvest of 150 tonnes - on only 20 hectares of land - is predicted for this year.

There are plans underway to expand the project and international exports are set to commence in August to markets across Europe, As and Seychelles.

According to a statement issued by Cherry Irrigations, the historic harvest is currently underway at the project located close to the Okavango East.

Cherry Irrigation designed and implemented the fully automated drip irrigation and fertigation management system for the landmark p

The fruit is being sold and marketed under the trading name Namib Blue and is earmarked for Namibian as well as international consu

Exceptional fruit

Namibian manager of Cherry Irrigation, Willem Mostert, said the quality of the fruit harvested so far has been exceptional.

"We are proving what is possible with the right planning, infrastructure and management in place."

Mashare project director Albert Basson said the harvest for this year is set to continue into late October.

"We are projecting a yield of up to 150 tonnes, as different varieties reach maturity. Currently, three varieties imported from the US - AtlasBlue, JupiterBlue and BiancaBlue. The plantings were established in November 2019, with 16 hectares under net, two hectares in t

Untapped potential

Mashare Berries plans to double its production area by the end of 2021, with Cherry Irrigation onboard.

"Ultimately, within the next five years, we would like to expand blueberry cultivation across 200 hectares to 300 hectares of land in the r

Cherry Irrigation executive director, Charles Cherry, said he believes the success of the pilot project attests to the enormous untapped p

He said these areas can effectively produce a range of crop types through careful water and resource management.

"We are seeing first-hand from this development and others we're involved with across Namibia that customised irrigation design is the sustainability and commercial profitability over the long term."

May cost more

According to Cherry, the outlay of quality equipment, custom designs, smart technologies and artificial intelligence monitoring solution

"But for crops like blueberries that are highly sensitive to climatic conditions and soil and water quality, we believe this approach is cruc

Basson agreed. "We partnered with Cherry Irrigation after seeing their success with custom system designs for blueberry plantations in of Namibia that we are working to unlock."

Mashare Berries is a subsidiary of Mashare Irrigation, which produces a variety of grains and vegetables, including wheat, maize, sorghum local Namibian market.



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