

The future in hybrid capsicums

Vegetables

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A new capsicum variety will hit the Australian market later this year – a hybrid breed that is resistant to a highly infectious virus affecting other varieties. Aptly named Bloodshot thanks to its deep red colour.

The development of new vegetable varieties plays an essential role in the challenge to constantly improve the yield, quality and pest resistance in different commodities.

Syngenta is one example of a global company that invests millions of dollars of research into developing new vegetable varieties for the market, which can sometimes take up to 15 years to complete. In the capsicum space, the company has had market share in the Remy variety for the best part of 30 years courtesy of a breeding program from France.

Recently, Syngenta has focused on developing other types of the sweet pepper and will soon introduce a new hybrid capsicum variety, Bloodshot, to the Australian market. Syngenta Portfolio Manager – Solanaceae and Cucumbers, Australasia, Dion Potter explained the reasoning behind the development.

“What we’ve come up against with the Remy variety in the past couple of years is the inception of Tobacco Mosaic Virus (TMV),” Mr Potter said.

“Remy does not have resistance to that particular virus, so what we’ve needed to come up with is a new variety that is a Remy-type that has resistance to the virus. Over the last two to three years, we have started looking at material that has this resistance.

“Bloodshot is a new variety that now offers that to the growers in order to carry on a Remy-type which supports that disease resistance requirement as well.”

The variety also features intermediate nematode resistance.

Product development

The process of developing a hybrid capsicum variety takes approximately seven years. It involves taking two parents; that is, two sweet pepper varieties and crossing them.

“The prodigy that comes from those crosses will be determined as the hybrid. Those parents will have attributes that we’re looking for in the new variety, whether that is fruit quality, disease resistance and so on,” Mr Potter said.

“That’s a very high level overview of how hybrid is developed and that’s how we get new attributes, and the varieties that we’re looking for to meet market requirements.”

Uniquely Australian

Australia was the only country in the world to pick up on the incumbent capsicum variety (Remy), which Mr Potter said was quite a unique shape.

The Lamuyo capsicum variety is approximately one-and-a-half times the length of the Bloodshot variety. The Bloodshot is Semi Lamuyo, meaning it’s a medium Remy size. It is also suitable for the Remy planting timeslot, which is from autumn to spring.

The new hybrid capsicum variety also tolerates heat and cold stress, and can produce consistent fruit uniformity and yield with a strong shelf life.

“The Bloodshot is very much in-between and there are probably no seed companies anywhere breeding this type specifically,” Mr Potter explained.

“It’s something Syngenta has done uniquely, in its own right, and found a point of difference in the local market that’s been able to be capitalised on for growers and retailers alike.”

For more information, please contact Syngenta Portfolio Manager - Solanaceae and Cucumbers, Australasia Dion Potter at dion.potter@syngenta.com

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Tags:
remy
bloodshot
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