Future of sour cherry – from bulk market to a diversity supported innovative product market

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Introduction
Stagnation in production size, low fruit prices and growers choice of alternative crops indicate that the European market for sour cherry for juice may be almost saturated. Compared to other fruits sour cherry has only reached a small degree of market penetration and there is therefore scope for a future increase in production. Diversifying the genetic and regional variation in sour cherry fruit quality and matching this to increased product diversity and innovation could potentially lead to a better competition, better grower prices, higher total EU production and a higher diversity of sour cherry products to the consumer.

From existing market to the future market
Sour cherry fruits are traditionally used mainly for processing into mixed juices in Europe, with a minor use for marmalade, dried fruits, confectionery and alcoholic drinks like wine, brandy and liqueur. Direct fresh consumption of sour cherry fruits is still small but of increasing interest. Marketing of fresh frozen sour cherry directly to the consumer is important in some EU regions.

What sour cherry fruit quality match individual products best?
The product profile, consumer preferences, traditions and adaption to production processes may influence the wanted level of sugar, acidity, color, phenolics, aroma compounds, taste, antioxidants, health compounds, firmness, juiciness etc. But what is the preferred fruit quality for each product? And how could this be identified? As a symposium participant you can give your first thoughts about this on the questionnaire associated with this poster.

Change of breeding focus
In a future strategy for increased sour cherry production and marketing, breeding focus should be shifted into a higher gear using professional partners to align with consumers preferences and ensure strong marketing of such products.

Conclusion
Aim to:
- Expand European genetic diversity in fruit quality
- Exploit cultivation/geographical fruit quality differences
- Link variation to improved EU product diversity
- Aim for high value products
- Cooperate with food developers and marketing experts
- Increase EU production and export of sour cherry
- Improve EU regional competitiveness in sour cherry
- Conserve and promote use of regional genetic resources
- Improve cherry product diversity/quality to consumers

Fig. 1. What combination of sugar and color should we aim for in breeding for future individual products? Clonal variation in breeding pool shown.

Fig. 2. What combination of sugar and total acidity should we aim for in breeding for future individual products? Clonal variation in breeding pool shown.

Fig. 3. Increased future genetic variation and increased product diversity is expected to increase the market absorption of sour cherry and support an increasing future production

Fig. 4. What sour cherry fruit quality match individual products best?