CORNELL CHRONICLE

Cornell signs grape research and licensing venture with Sun World International

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Joe Ogrodnick/NYSAES

Sun World's Michael Striem, left, and Cornell's Bruce Reisch in one of the Geneva Agricultural Experiment Station vineyards.

Cornell has entered into a long-term table grape research collaboration with Sun World International LLC.

Cornell and Sun World operate two of the world's leading fresh grape breeding programs. The venture aims to combine their research strengths to develop improved varieties for grape growers, both here and abroad.

"This agreement, a unique public-private collaboration, follows nearly a decade of research cooperation between Cornell and Sun World and is likely to bring the global fruit industry many new types of grapes," said Bruce Reisch, a grape geneticist at Cornell's Agricultural Experiment Station in Geneva, N.Y. Reisch will work with Sun World grape breeder Michael Striem to combine desirable fruit traits and characteristics from the New York and California programs.

"In addition to supporting the aims of a public university and a private company, our combined research efforts and the new grape varieties we will develop together will benefit grape growers worldwide," Striem said.

Cornell's expertise, cultivated over more than a century, is in breeding flavorful, disease-resistant and cold-hardy grapes for the cool climate of upstate New York and similar regions. Sun World's genetic stock has been developed over a 25-year period to produce large seedless, sweet, crunchy, attractive grapes in the Mediterranean climate of southern California that ship and store well.

Scientists at both institutions will exchange such plant materials as pollen and cuttings, and regularly visit each other's research sites. The collaboration provides both breeding programs, which use conventional plant breeding methods, direct access to a vast collection of grape cultivars and selections. Their genetic resources will be pooled as a common source of such desirable traits as berry size, early or late ripening, flavor, color, and disease and environmental stress resistance.

Cornell is represented in the collaboration through the Cornell Center for Technology Enterprise and Commercialization, which is responsible for the management of Cornell's technology. Sun World, a California-based leading grower and marketer of a wide-range of fresh fruit and vegetables, will manage the U.S. and international introduction of all new varieties produced from the combined research effort.

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