

## **Changing Perspectives in Market Development of Minor Tropical Fruits**

The term “exotic” conjures up a picture of an isolated tranquil island with beaches that are long, sunny and white sanded. This was the dream holiday sold by the travel agency where such a trip could only be afforded by the few affluent holiday makers. These places are hard to reach and even the lucky few could not make this trip every year. Such marketing ideas will change. Budget airlines, the thinning ozone layer, climate change, and of late, the global recession will put new definitions of exotic locations.

In reflection, the banana and the pineapple were the first exotic fruits of the tropics. Holiday makers had returned from the tropics with a pineapple in each hand going through customs. The derogatory term ‘banana republic’ is no longer acceptable in diplomatic cocktail parties. Today, the banana and the pineapple have become staples and commodities, traded by the largest plantation conglomerates and are issue of contentions between the riches continents. They have graduated from the tropical exotic fruit category.

Meanwhile what happened to all of the other tropical fruits from the latitudinal region? These tropical fruits have remained exotic, which means that they will be expensive, hard to get, fragile and sold exclusively in small quantities. Every foreign traveler to the tropics will fall in love with at least one tropical fruit, whether for its taste, or shape or color. But, when he returns home, he returns to eating his stone fruits and berries.

There is a surging interest in the other less known tropical fruits by the health food industry buffs, bio-technology researchers and even the mainstream supermarket chains. But how are the regulators and the industry stakeholders able to reach these new horizons? What is holding back the marketing penetration?

The production mechanism must take a new approach towards quality and productivity when growing these fruits. Traders must become more innovative in their marketing strategies in selling tropical fruits. The authorities will have to bury their archaic policy approaches in the development of the fruit industry. Networking is the buzzword and the stakeholders must lock-on to this spatial fraternity or else will be left out only to scrape for the marginal returns in the fringe market.

In this oral presentation, the author hopes to examine some of the weak links of the fruit supply chain in the country, and offer some positive ideas for the participants to look at the fruit industry of the export trade and the domestic market with new perspectives.