



Cosmic Crisp variety is projected to show an increase of 28.5% compared with a year ago, industry leaders say.

Photo courtesy of Proprietary Variety Management

Cosmic Crisp sales are aiming higher

By Tom Karst

The Cosmic Crisp apple is a rising star for Washington apple marketers, but how high it will soar is still a question, marketers say.

The proprietary variety, grown only in Washington state in the U.S., is projected to show an increase of 28.5% compared with a year ago. The variety was first planted for commercial use in spring 2017 and first sold in 2019.

Cosmic Crisp was developed in 1998. Washington State University professor Bruce Barritt crossed Honeycrisp and Enterprise apples to come up with variety WA 38, later named Cosmic Crisp.

Cosmic Crisp is estimated at 4.6% of the state's 2022 harvest of about 108.7 million cartons, up from 3.2% of the crop a year ago, according to the Washington State Tree Fruit Association.

There have been some speed bumps with taking Cosmic Crisp to market, said Dan Davis, director of business development for Oneonta Starr Ranch Growers, Wenatchee, Wash.

"Perhaps it's the time of release being coincidental to the pandemic, but the variety has struggled to encourage trial on a widespread basis at the pricing the growers originally expected," Davis said. "We made up some ground this season, but it's still got work to be done."

After 20 years of development, Cosmic

Crisp launched commercially in December 2019 with about 650,000 boxes. 2021-2022 production was estimated at close to 4.5 million cartons.

"I think the apple has gained tremendous momentum, including in the later season," said Mike Preacher, vice president of marketing for Yakima, Wash.-based Domex Superfresh Growers. "Watching it climb the charts in Nielsen supports this."

The greater volume of Cosmic Crisp harvested this year will help boost category sales by filling in shelf gaps that may be short due to availability issues that may pop up on other varieties, Preacher said.

Cosmic Crisp apples will continue to see significant increases over the next couple of years, said Chuck Sinks, president of sales and marketing for Sage Fruit Company, Yakima, Wash.

"We are confident that, by advanced planning with our partners, maintaining a desirable price and being able to provide product late into the season, both retailers and consumers will continue to welcome the Cosmic Crisp," Sinks said.

Cosmic Crisp promotions have been successful so far, said Brianna Shales, director of marketing for Stemilt Growers, Wenatchee, Wash. "There are still opportunities to continue introducing and encouraging 'switching' of this apple to consumers," Shales said. "Increasing volumes are exciting because we will be able to offer it longer and it is making that transition from a seasonal offering to a core offering that is always available." **P**