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IFG celebrating 20th anniversary in grapes

By

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Since 2001, Bakersfield, CA-based IFG has grown more than 75,000 grape seedlings and the category is a large and important part of its business and portfolio, with more than 70,000 acres under license across 14 countries.

The company is widely recognized for inventing the Cotton Candy and Sweet Globe grapes.

“Compared to other table grape breeders, our company is young,” said Andy Higgins, IFG’s chief executive officer. “We are celebrating our 20th anniversary this year and have been actively licensing only for the past decade or so. We are fortunate that several of our first introductions were successful out of the gate, including Sweet Celebration. Our development has continued and we now have more than 40 patented varieties.”

IFG’s breeding program is broad, covering grower needs, retailer requirements and always looking to bring the very best forward to the consumer.

Higgins noted success comes from fruit varieties that perform for the consumer, so they tell their friends and come back for more.

“A broad support mechanism to give resources to growers and marketers so they have the best chance for success,” Higgins said. “We view ourselves as partners to the entire supply chain and want all to be successful in delivering the very best fruit to market.”

The company was notably impacted by the pandemic, from labor shortages and delays at harvest and packing to delays at export to impacts seen as various wholesale and retail markets responded to restrictions.

“At the end of the day, fruit still moved to the consumers’ tables globally, but the path was often not easy,” Higgins said.

“Costs in many categories of inputs also increased. In certain markets, we see a trend towards simplification of the retail offering.”

Since newer varieties from IFG and other breeders tend to score higher with consumers, that is where the company’s strategy lies in 2021.

“Getting these varieties into the consumers’ hands by name will drive sales for the category,” Higgins said. “Consumers want fruit that tastes good and eats well. Modern genetics and good grower and marketer support can deliver this.”

IFG has two celebrations this year — its 20th anniversary and its Fruitworks | The IFG Discovery Center, a new \$12 million research facility in McFarland, CA

“Fruitworks | The IFG Discovery Center will include 27,000 square feet of new lab, greenhouses and business support buildings on 160 acres of land and will be the future site of IFG where we will innovate, create, breed and grow many of the new varieties consumers and licensees have come to expect, as well as employ people in the Kern County and surrounding area,” Higgins said.

“This facility and site is a representation of all the hard work our team has put in over the last 20 years, and is also a symbol of what is to come for IFG as we continue to be the future of fruit breeding,” he said. “I want to thank everyone who could join us today for coming and learning more about how we will continue to recruit talent and further our pioneering breeding program, all here in McFarland.”

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