

First seedless watermelons from European eco-friendly solar greenhouses in Belgian shops

Spanish growers pioneer eco-responsible seedless watermelons.

The growers in the Solar Greenhouses in southern Spain are pioneers in producing new fruit varieties, such as seedless watermelons. These have a much more favourable ecological footprint than other watermelon varieties grown on other continents. The solar greenhouse cultivation methods used in Almería, and Granada reinforce the eco-sustainability of this European fruit. Last year, 492,000 tonnes of seedless watermelons were produced in 10,600 hectares of solar greenhouses. Belgian consumers are very fond of this healthy and refreshing fruit. The first watermelons have reached maturity and are now available in shops and supermarkets in Belgium.

With the seedless watermelons grown in the Solar Greenhouses, southern Spain's fruit and vegetable growers bring an important agricultural innovation to the European level. Thanks to their sophisticated cultivation techniques and innovative spirit, they offer consumers increasingly concerned about sustainable development, a healthy, tasty, and original fruit produced in the most local and eco-responsible way possible.

Moreover, as this fruit comes from European soil, it travels much shorter distances than fruit grown outside Europe to reach shop shelves. But above all, solar greenhouses are a very environmentally and climate friendly tool. They use a combination of natural ventilation techniques, side and top windows and heating by direct sunlight captured by transparent plastic sheets in the greenhouse. This method of production has a low environmental footprint because 96% of the energy used comes from the sun and not from fossil fuels. A highly efficient drip irrigation system makes the most of every drop of water.

"The demand for quality fruit and vegetable varieties, grown in Europe in an environmentally responsible way, is increasing all the time. The production of this watermelon variety in our Solar Greenhouses on the coast of Almería and Granada is a perfect response to this trend for user-friendly, sustainably grown fruit", comments Juan Antonio González, president of APROA.

A versatile superfood

Watermelon is a trendy fruit in southern Europe, but also here. It can be eaten at any time of the day: as a snack or dessert, for breakfast, in salads or other dishes, for lemonades and cocktails. This seedless version obviously improves the ease of use and consumption. It is the perfect answer to buyers who want fruit that can be eaten immediately and requires little or no preparation or cleaning.

Seedless watermelons also have other advantages. Not only their taste but also their health benefits. They contain beta-carotene, converted by the body into vitamin A - a known antioxidant and important preventive factor against cardiovascular disease, prostate cancer, and cancer of the digestive tract. Watermelon is also rich in potassium. Not forgetting its high-water content and hydrating properties, it is a very suitable fruit in summer.

What is a solar greenhouse?

A solar greenhouse is a closed structure covered with a plastic film through which the sun's rays shine, giving the plants the light they need to maintain the right temperature for their development during the winter months so that they can carry out photosynthesis. In the process, the plants produce nutrients from the CO₂ they absorb from the air and release enormous amounts of oxygen into the atmosphere. Solar greenhouses are very different from the production methods used in other greenhouses, which use fossil fuel-based heating and lighting systems that consume up to 30% more energy and are therefore harmful to the environment.

About CuteSolar

CuteSolar is a support programme funded by the European Union (EU) and supported by a consortium of Andalusian fruit and vegetable growers' associations (APROA), the Spanish inter-branch fruit and vegetable association (HORTIESPAÑA) and the European fruit and vegetable trade association FruitVegetablesEUROPE (EUCOFEL). The aim of the information and promotion campaign, which will run until 2022, is to inform consumers about the sustainable and environmentally friendly production and cultivation methods of EU fruit and vegetables, the high standards of greenhouse technology and the quality of fruit and vegetables from southern Spain.

The programme, with a total investment of €1.95 million, is co-financed by the proposing organisations and the European Union, will run for three years (2020-2022) and will be implemented in Spain, Germany and Belgium.

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