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## **Hazera's global approach towards the ToBRFV virus: local teams and growers the key to success**

**Recently, Hazera successfully launched tomato varieties for the Mexican market that are resistant to the ToBRFV-virus. But the virus extends much further than just Mexico, as it affects growers worldwide. We take a look at the broader picture with Alejandro Szechtman, Portfolio marketing director of Tomato's at Hazera. He talks us through Hazera's worldwide approach towards the ToBRFV virus, the development of resistant tomato varieties and perspectives for the future. "We have a quality-first policy: a variety is only launched if we are sure it performs well both in resistance as in product quality."**

As portfolio marketing director of tomato's, Alejandro knows that each market around the world has its own issues. In case of the ToBRFV virus, this is no different. So how do you come to understand a virus that provides growers in different areas with different challenges? Alejandro: "We have a very close relationship with our growers, but also retailers and consumers, in each market. This allows us to understand their needs and problems. When ToBRFV hit, we quickly understood it would be a major problem for our growers." As part of the Limagrain Group, Hazera started to invest in and develop what the growers needed to fight the virus: Tomato varieties that provide good resistance to the virus, but also excellent economic performance.

### **Common efforts**

According to Alejandro, the close collaboration between local teams and the globally working marketing team is vital in developing these resistant varieties. "It's a common effort between different disciplines within the company. We have R&D which includes breeders and genetics developing the products, the marketing department delivering these products to the markets and the local product development teams who test the varieties in each market. They have the best knowledge of their own market and the challenges that come with it". The marketing division oversees the global view, and forms the bridge between all different functions. By collecting all data from local teams, the marketing division is able to decide which varieties are ready to be launched commercially.

The process towards this commercial launch is very thorough and all-embracing. "It's a constant process", says Alejandro. "We look at the challenges growers are facing now, but also at the ones they will face in the future". So what does this look like on a daily basis? "trials, trials and more trials. The process of developing a new variety takes several years. We make a massive effort to conform each variety to the market it is destined for. The goal is always the same: big, round and red tomato's that aren't affected by the virus. But different conditions take different solutions to get to the same goal." Alejandro emphasizes that this process would not be possible without working very closely with local growers.

### **Launches in different markets**

Globally, Hazera has been seeing more and more results of commercially launched varieties with ToBRFV-resistance. "Recently, we had a successful launch of the Canelo-variety in Mexico", says Alejandro. "We started working on that variety from scratch in 2015. This variety was ready for commercialization in 7 years, which is quite an efficient process." But Mexico isn't the only success



story. Alejandro: “ We have already launched ToBRFV-resistant varieties in Italy, with Spain and Greece following soon. We are developing and launching additional varieties and typologies for various markets, always looking for the aspects that make our variety perform well both economically and in resistance. The competition isn’t always able to provide both, but for us they are the benchmark for releasing a new variety.”

#### **Always working on the future**

Last, Alejandro talks about Hazera’s future-oriented policy. “We continuously monitor the situations and developments in every market, so we can be ready to provide our customers with solutions when facing new situations. Wherever needed, whenever needed. We feel confident that we can provide our growers and customers with the solutions that are needed for the challenges in their specific market. Because we work closely with them, know what’s going on both locally and globally, and we’re constantly developing and testing new varieties. Like I always say; at Hazera we don’t provide varieties, we provide solutions.”

Meet us at the Global tomato congress in Rotterdam! We are happy to meet you.