

Launch of cover innovation promises reduced fruit growing costs

A newly launched crop protection solution which enables growers to open and close fruit covers in minutes is promising increased efficiency and, as a result, lower production costs and all-round performance of orchards.

The developers of the Wayki (<http://www.wayki.cl>) solution say growers are already using it on cherry crops to deploy and remove protective covers faster in response to changing weather. A single worker can cover or remove the covers from one hectare of orchards in just 20 minutes. With most existing automatic or semi-automatic systems, this process took far longer and required significantly more labour. Some other systems are very expensive.

Growers can use Wayki to give their crops exposure to natural conditions for as long as possible but at the same time protect them from hazards such as rain or hail quickly when they occur. They operate the system with a conventional hand drill, which turns a winding mechanism to open and close the covers.



The Wayki solution sits above the structure of existing poles and it can use different kinds of covers across the same orchard space. The company is working with growers to develop Wayki for use in other crops, including blueberries, apples and others, and in vineyards.

Keeping the fruit exposed to the air for longer, rather than inside the artificial microclimate created under covers, helps create a firmer and sweeter fruit. In the case of cherries grown under permanent cover, for example, the fruit is generally softer - losing up to 10 Durofell points – and is also less sweet.

Wayki was developed in Chile, where production of cherries is forecast to grow to almost 40,000 hectares by 2020 and which accounts for approximately 85 per cent of the southern hemisphere's exports of this fruit to the northern hemisphere. The solution is launching in Europe for the first time.

Cristián Lopez of Wayki Europe said: "Around the world, we are experiencing more and more severe and unexpected weather conditions. This has serious implications for the fruit business, as it raises the possibility of events including rain and hail damaging fruit, and high winds damaging growing infrastructure such as poles and cables.

"Wayki is a very exciting development because it gives growers the control to cover and uncover their orchards and vineyards in a matter of minutes in response to these events. It saves time and labour costs and we also believe ultimately helps produce a superior fruit. Wayki has proved itself in Chile and we are now in discussions with growers, installers and research centres in Italy and a number of other European countries."

Wayki Europe will soon have installed lines in Italian and Norwegian cherry orchards and is working with growers in Chile to adapt the system further.

The patented Wayki system costs between EUR 350 and EUR 450 per line, depending on the length of the line and distance between poles.

Watch the Wayki solution in action here:

www.youtube.com/channel/UC7c6u0KCH3PI6OLgBgDt-KA

(<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC7c6u0KCH3PI6OLgBgDt-KA>)

For more information:

www.wayki.cl (<http://www.wayki.cl>)

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(<https://www.unisorting.com/en/products/apple-sorting-grading-packing-machines/>)
