

MARKET STATUS UPDATE

— FOR GROWERS

GM Apples and GM Apple Trees in Canada

Summary

The first-ever genetically engineered (genetically modified or GM) apple is now being sold in the US and Canada. A few orchards of GM apple trees have been established in the US, but there are none in Canada yet.

Background

In 2015, the company Okanagan Specialty Fruits (OSF) got approval for its genetically modified non-browning Golden Delicious and Granny Smith apples in Canada and the United States, followed by an approval for the company's GM Fuji. The GM apples are trademarked "Arctic Apples". The company says the GM apple slices will last almost a week longer than non-GM pre-sliced apples, with a shelf life of 28 days.

Market Launch

I don't know if we'll ever see them loose on the produce shelf. Maybe packaged in small bags or plastic containers.¹

— Neal Carter, Okanagan Specialty Fruits, 2016

The GM apple company Okanagan Specialty Fruits says it is "focused strictly on pre-sliced apples."²

SOLD IN CANADA: FOODSERVICE 2019-2020

A small amount of pre-sliced GM apples has been sold in Canada, unlabeled, from the 2019 harvest, through an **unnamed food service outlet** and more could be sold after the 2020 harvest. This means that GM apple slices could be served in university cafeterias, hotels and catering businesses, hospital and prison meals, restaurants, or through ready-made salads and fruit-trays in grocery stores.

US TEST MARKET 2017-PRESENT

- » In 2017, the company first tested the GM apple in ten stores in the US.
- » Reports say that GM apple slices were introduced into foodservice in 2019.³
- » They are only sold in bags of sliced apples (5oz, 10oz, and 40oz bags) or as dried apple chips in snack-sized bags.
- » In the US, they are not labeled as genetically modified. The bags of sliced apples carry the "Arctic" logo and a digital QR code (readable by smartphones) that provides more information.



GM Tree Plantings

GM apple orchards are established in the US but not yet in Canada, and the GM apple trees are not for sale in nurseries in Canada or the US:

- » The company says it will plant its own orchards and contract growers to plant GM trees. The company will own all the trees and apples.⁴
- » The company is not disclosing planting locations, or names of growers, packers or retailers.
- » The Canadian government will not be tracking where, or how many, GM apples trees are planted.

PLANTINGS IN THE US

- » Orchards of GM apples are established in Washington State and New York, where field tests were taking place. There were no such test plots in Canada (because of opposition from BC growers).
- » The company says they expected 8 million pounds of Arctic apples in the 2019-20 season.
- » The company has contracts with several Washington nurseries.⁵
- » OSF is building a facility in Washington to receive, store, process, package and ship. It should be completed in 2020 and be approximately one million square feet.

PLANTINGS IN CANADA

The public is reliant on Okanagan Specialty Fruits for information about plantings in Canada:

- » In January 2016, president Neal Carter said that only a handful of the GM "Arctic" apple trees were being grown in Canada, in a greenhouse in Summerland, B.C., where he has his own orchard.⁶
- » In November 2016, Carter told the Certified Organic Associations of BC (COABC) that, "plantings in BC will not occur for several years or more due to the high cost of land and shortage of larger land parcels. When plantings in BC do take place, all trees and fruit will be under the direct oversight of OSF on either our own land or that of growers specifically contracted to produce fruit for us."⁷
- » In January 2019, media reported that the company "chose Eastern Washington for production due to less expensive land prices, ample irrigation water and a labor force that is tight, but not as tight as Canada's," and that "OSF plans to produce in Canada, perhaps in Ontario, and the Eastern U.S. at some point."

The Future

NEW GM FRUIT

- » The company is currently growing GM "Arctic" Granny Smith, Golden Delicious and Fuji apples, but planning a GM "Arctic" Gala next, and has mentioned plans for GM McIntosh and GM Honeycrisp apples.⁸
- » The company says it is also working to genetically engineer cherries, peaches and pears.

MARKET PROSPECTS

The future of the GM apple will be influenced by the success or failure of retailer test markets with snack-bags of sliced apples in the US and the success of food service sales in Canada. However:

- » Many small retailers in Canada have signed a pledge to never sell the GM apple.
- » All major grocery chains in Canada have told concerned consumers that they have "no plans" to carry it at this time.

www.cban.ca/apple

To discuss and share further information, please contact

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CONSUMER GUIDE:

How to Avoid Eating the GM Apple
cban.ca/GMappleconsumerguide

- 1 Laura Robin, "From Tree to Table: The Arctic Apple is Ready to Blossom," Ottawa Citizen, January 22, 2016.
- 2 Chris Crawford, Apple and pear trends, Supermarket Perimeter, June 1, 2020
- 3 Surrey Now-Leader, "B.C. fruit company that developed nonbrowning Arctic apple sells to U.S. firm." February 7, 2020.
- 4 Ross Courtney, "The next GMO apple," Good Fruit Grower, June 3, 2016.
- 5 Ross Courtney. "Warming up to Arctic apples," Good Fruit Grower, January 10, 2019.
- 6 Laura Robin, Ibid.
- 7 Letter from Neal Carter, Okanagan Specialty Fruits, to Walter Makepeace, Certified Organic Associations of BC, November 1, 2016.
- 8 Laura Robin, Ibid.