

# Local breeding with global impact



## Spreading happiness with a Canadian pear

**The power of partnerships is promising an international future for a Canadian pear variety first bred four decades ago. Happi Pear™ has recently made its North American consumer debut thanks to the combined efforts of Vineland, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) and grower-marketer Stemilt.**

The pear traces its origins to the AAFC tree fruit breeding program, now under the auspices of Vineland, which has been working to bring some of the most promising varieties to market.

Happi Pear™ has attributes in demand with consumers: firm with sweet, juicy flavour and a sun-kissed rosy, yellow-green skin. And it's popular with growers too, consistently producing large fruit from trees that are resistant to fire blight, a destructive bacterial disease affecting apple and pear trees.

"We haven't released any branded pears in the U.S., so we're really excited about this one because it is grower-friendly with unique texture and flavour," says Brianna Shales, Marketing Director at Stemilt. "Vineland has a strong history of coming out with new fruit varieties."

Along with encouraging more Canadian growers and consumers to turn to pears as a local fruit choice, there are also high hopes this new fruit can help rejuvenate the U.S. pear market, where long-time staple varieties like Bartlett, Bosc and Anjou dominate. Although grower-friendly, the traditional varieties are not novel to consumers who are looking for a different product.

The pear could also be commercialized internationally. Vineland is working with AAFC, Stemilt and fruit tree producer Associated International Group of Nurseries (AIGN) to move the pear into non-North American markets.





“Europe is very much into pears and always looking for new selections. In the U.S, the market is growing and as we move into more varieties like Happy Pear™ that deliver for the grower and are a product consumers will enjoy, we can really make a splash,” says Kevin Brandt of Brandt Fruit Trees. “We’ve worked with Vineland and their breeding programs for at least five years to commercialize some of their selections and we have a good relationship.”

Brandt Fruit Trees is a member of AIGN, an organization founded by Lynnell Brandt in 1988 to manage intellectual property and work with nurseries to provide high quality fruit trees.

“With pears, if we can have a critical mass and more visibility on shelves, we can add excitement into the category and if we can also do that on a global basis, it will strengthen everything we do,” adds Brandt.

Stemilt worked closely with Vineland’s Consumer Insights team on marketplace testing in Ontario over the last two growing seasons.

Consumers at select Longo’s stores were offered the opportunity to sample Happy Pear™ and provide feedback on its attributes, and in 2020, the Vineland team helped Stemilt in selecting just the right trademarked name for the new pear.

“Whenever we name or brand something, it’s like naming a child and we go through a lot of different ideas. With the help of the Vineland team, we landed on Happy Pear™, which is short, fun, memorable —

and something we hope will get people excited to try something new,” says Shales.

Jennifer DeEll, Fresh Market Quality Specialist at Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs also worked closely with Vineland and Stemilt to conduct postharvest trials at the Simcoe Research Station.

In Canada, limited quantities of the new pear, grown in the Niagara region, southwestern Ontario and Quebec, were available in select Ontario grocery stores this year, ahead of larger production volumes expected in 2022.



## ***At a glance***

- A new Canadian pear variety, Happy Pear™ has made its consumer debut thanks to the combined efforts of Vineland and grower-marketer Stemilt.
- Vineland’s Consumer Insights team worked closely with Stemilt on Ontario marketplace testing over the last two growing seasons.
- Happy Pear™ has attributes consumers love — firm with sweet, juicy flavour — but is also grower-friendly, producing large fruit from fire blight-resistant trees.