

# US growers bet on fruitful trade with India for Northwest Cherries

The removing of fumigation requirement by India will help the growers improve their market presence

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New Delhi

It's a second bite at the cherry, for growers from the US betting on a fruitful trade with India. With India removing the fumigation requirement on cherries shipped from the US, the Northwest Cherry Growers (NWCG) are hopeful of growing their market presence in India rapidly.

On Tuesday, as the NWCG, a trade association based in the US, launched its promotion campaign in India to introduce this summer's crop of the juicy red fruit in retail stores here. Ron Verdonk, Minister-Counselor for Agricultural Affairs, Embassy of the United States of Amer-



**CHERISHABLE MOMENTS.** Sumit Saran, Ron Verdonk, Chef Vicky Ratnani, Kavita Devgan and Keith Hu at the event to promote Northwest Cherries in Delhi

ica, commented how earlier too they had access to the Indian market, but the fumigation protocol caused distribution issues for the Pacific Northwest cherries.

Fumigated cherries tend to soften quickly thereby affecting shelf-life and onward distribution to smaller towns, where according

to Sumit Saran, In-Country Marketing Representative of NWCG, there is now growing consumer interest in exotic imported fruit. He described how even places like Dhanbad are showing interest in products like blueberries and cherries. The Northwest cherries are currently retailing in the

Indian market for ₹1,500 a kg though in the next few weeks as more volumes come in, prices are likely to come down, said Saran. July is the start of the season for the US cherries which retail till August end and so far 4,400 boxes each of 10 kg have been shipped to India.

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Meanwhile, Verdonk was also pretty gung-ho about the apples and walnuts trade from the US picking up in India this year after the announcement that the retaliatory tariffs on these will be ended during the recent visit of Prime Minister Modi to the US. "Come September and we will have a level playing field for Washington apples again,"

said Verdonk. In 2017, India was the second biggest export market for Washington Apples, raking in \$120 million for the 1,400 odd growers of the fruit. However, in 2019, India imposed retaliatory custom duties on 28 American products including apples, walnuts, chickpeas and lentils. This dealt a body blow to Washington Apples which faced an additional 20 per cent duty (added to the existing 50 per cent) and resulted in only \$1 million worth of the fruit being exported to India last season. India is a big consumer of apples, and imported a total of 3,60,000 tonnes last year. "The opportunity in India is immense," said Verdonk.