

### **Sound nutrition underpins Polish export drive**

FiloCal, originally developed in the Netherlands, now has a global following among leading apple growers and producer groups.

Fruit Family consists of 87 fruit producers growing more than 1,000ha of apples near Grojec, a traditional apple-producing area 30 miles south of Warsaw.

The group was established by Grojec-based fruit specialist Activ to secure a supply of top-quality Polish apples for export within Europe and to Africa, the Middle East and south-west Asia. Farms are all certified for the countries or retailers to whom they sell, including UK retailers.

In general, members run small family farms, averaging 10-12 ha, with high-density orchards of 2,500 and 3,000 trees/ha. Key varieties include Jonagold selections such as Red Prince, Gala selections and a mix of older varieties including Golden Delicious, Idared, Gloster, Szampion and Empire.

Fruit Family delivers fruit to Activ, which is responsible for storage, sorting and sales. The company's logistics centre consists of one of the most modern fruit sizing line in Europe with a capacity of 30t/hr and a state-of-the-art packing facility, along with 20,000t of controlled atmosphere cold storage.

"Fruit Family's priorities have always been to offer the highest quality products, to reduce production costs and to maximize the volume of supply," says Activ.

"To meet these goals the group had to introduce and develop common cultivation methods to boost productivity and quality with due respect to the environment. They realised it was vital to match input of nutrients to meet expected output and the necessary quality.

"Growers have carried out several independent trials and observations for several years, finding FiloCal nutrition program the most suitable and profitable. They see a big difference where the programme has been used."

This came to the fore last season, when bitter pit was a problem with many suppliers who had not paid adequate attention to nutrition.

Overall, the nutrition program significantly helped growers to drive up the quantity and quality in terms of firmness of fruit, skin roughening and damage. It also helped, as

indicated in the company's sorting line statistics, to limit loss due to rot, bitter pit and other storage problems.

"FiloCal has been recognized as one of the major best practices that led to better preservation and shelf-life of apples, which is essential for exporting fruit to distant destinations,".

"Application of FiloCal is certainly helping growers to receive a higher price on average, to stand out in a competitive market with high quality products and to win new sales areas."

### **FiloCal benefits**

- Easy application
- Can be sprayed together with many crop protection products
- Gives spray an optimal pH value of 6.5 – ideal for most crop protection products used.
- Can be applied during sensitive periods (eg blossom) and is not temperature sensitive.
- Competitively priced

### **Customised usage**

Three sorts of FiloCal are available:

- FiloCal Red – contains calcium and magnesium
- FiloCal Black – primarily based on nitrogen, potassium, phosphate, boron, iron, copper, manganese, molybdenum and zinc
- FiloCal Blue – based on boron, copper, manganese, molybdenum and zinc