

# FR*ui*TROP

English version

CLOSE-UP:  
PINEAPPLE

CMO & banana: a  
compromise at any price

Citrus & exotics  
Monthly review



### Producer country sheet

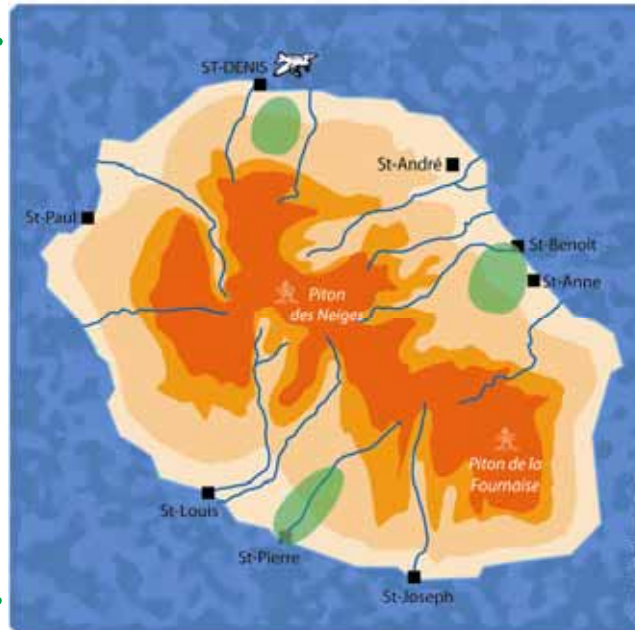
## 'Victoria' pineapple in Réunion

by Eric Imbert

*A traditional crop on the island, exports of 'Victoria' pineapple from Réunion developed in the 1980s within the framework of a programme launched by the authorities to diversify farming that was closely dependent on sugar cane. However, the European market is increasingly competitive and narrow for this high-quality product. Initiatives have been launched to differentiate Réunion fruits from those of competitors and to develop the processing sector on the island, while needs for agricultural diversification may increase in 2013 with the reform of the common market organisation of sugar.*

### Production zones

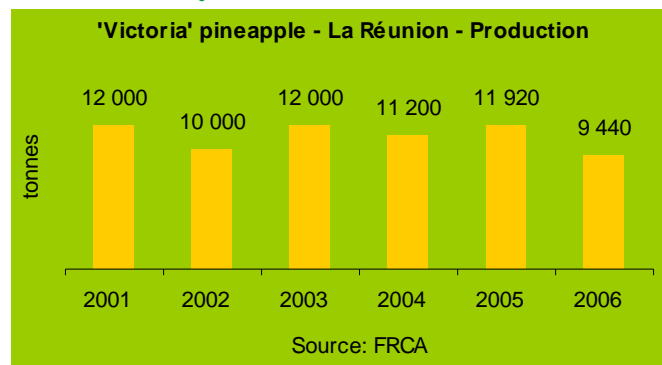
The plantations are in three main zones in the foothills of the two mountain ranges that form the greater part of the island. Pineapple is a traditional diversification crop that completes the incomes of market gardeners in the north. The plantations are concentrated at between 300 and 500 metres above sea level above Saint Denis and Sainte Marie on very steep land that is difficult to cultivate but with very good exposure to the sun. The zone is shrinking for reasons of urban pressure. Production is more commercial in the east in the Saint Benoît region.



Some sugar cane growers have diversified their operations to include pineapple by the reconversion of their good land at 50 to 450 metres above sea level at the end of the 1980s. Production is concentrated on exports in a zone with considerable precipitation and more moderate sunshine than in the rest of Réunion. The two systems described above coexist in the south-western part of the island. This zone has less rainfall and pineapple is found from sea level to an elevation of more than 750 m. This feature means that production can follow a different calendar to that of the other zones and ensure continuity in market supply.

### Production

'Victoria' pineapple was introduced in the island in the seventeenth century, and cultivation gradually developed to meet domestic market requirements, with about 150 hectares of plantations at the end of the 1980s. Subsequently, difficulties in the sugar sector—the pillar of the economy of the island—and state encouragement led some growers to diversify their activities. Thus the areas used for pineapple and other fruit and horticultural crops increased rapidly to better supply the domestic market and to develop an export sector with shipments to France and the EU. Pineapple plantations totalled some 400 ha in 2006, with production of about 16 000 t. The end of the guaranteed price of sugar in 2013 may well increase the need for cane growers to diversify and may cause renewed interest in pineapple and other fruits. With a domestic market with limited prospects for development, initiatives have emerged for the creation of alternative outlets, such as the differentiation of pineapples from Réunion and its export competitors and the development of a range of high-quality processed products. The main sanitary problem is black spot disease. The Chamber of Agriculture, CIRAD and the Regional Federation of Chambers of Agriculture provide technical assistance for the sector.



### Logistics

Transport is by air freight only. Sailing time to Europe is more than 30 days and this is not compatible with the transport of fresh produce.



## Outlets

Most production is sold on the domestic market, mainly through 'bazardiers'. These are local traders who sometimes buy the harvest on the plants and resell to roadside sellers—an entirely informal channel. Export volumes are modest. The processing phase is currently developing, with industrialists trying to make the most of the taste strong points of 'Victoria' from Réunion to create high-quality innovative products. A production unit manufacturing cubes and 'carpaccio' slices has started up and the upgrading of an existing juice factory is being examined.



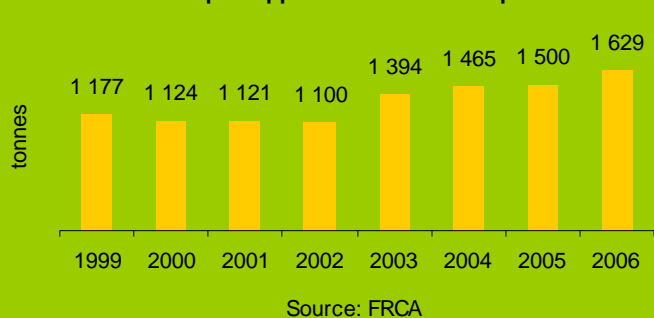
## Total exports

The export sector established in the 1980s to supply the EU is a complementary outlet for production. The volumes exported increased considerably in the 1990s

but tend to peak at between 1 500 and 2 000 tonnes per year. Cost price is high, especially as air freight must be used. The 'Victoria' market is thus still fairly narrow and seasonal (Christmas and New Year). In addition, the market shares of Réunion fruits are threatened by increasing competition from sources where labour is cheaper (Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and South Africa). To resist on the market, a number of growers have grouped in the Syndicat Qualité Fruits Réunion to segment the 'Victoria' market and ensure the recognition of the distinctive qualities of the fruits grown on the island. The procedure resulted in the obtaining of a 'Label Rouge' in 2006. This market

segment is increasing in volume but still very limited. Four cooperatives or producers' groups and two private exporters supply the European market.

'Victoria' pineapple - La Réunion - Exports



## Specifications of the 'Label Rouge' for 'Victoria de la Réunion'

Registered in 2006, the specifications of 'Label Rouge' Victoria pineapples have three levels of criteria.

- The fruit: it must weigh a minimum of 550 g and be sold whole and fresh. Colour must be at least level M2 (75 % of the surface is yellow). The proportions must be balanced, with a straight, green, fresh and healthy crown with a height proportional to the fruit. Finally, a minimum sugar content is guaranteed.

- Cultural practices: the fields for 'Label Rouge' production are identified in order to guarantee fruit quality and traceability and are monitored by a Syndicat Qualité Fruits technician to set up and ensure the respect of the good agricultural practices defined by the group. These practices are aimed at maintaining soil structure and fertility, providing fertilisation to match plant requirements, cultivation in a single cycle and a calendar restriction to forbid the harvesting of fruits during periods when pressure from black spot disease is strongest. Finally, transport of fruits to the packing station must be in boxes only to prevent any risk of bruising.
- Services provided: these include the harvesting date and a best before date so that a maximum period between harvesting and shipping means that consumers have a fresh fruit of high quality. Each fruit is labelled individually and bears a batch number to ensure full traceability. Controls are performed and recorded to ensure high fruit quality. Shipment must be by air only.

