

Innovation Competition at AGRA 2019

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Every year, one of the most anticipated events of the agricultural forum AGRA is the “Innovation Competition”, where innovative products and developments in the field of agriculture participate. They are presented for the first time at the international exhibition and demonstrate genuine innovations or original improvements and can be regarded as progress in the respective field.

Out of a total of 48 nominated products and developments from 28 companies and scientific institutes that took part in the AGRA 2019 “Innovation Competition”, 21 participants won awards. The Agricultural Academy was honoured with a total of 10 awards in the competition for innovative products at the international forum.

In the section “Varietal seeds and planting material” several innovations were distinguished: truffle mycorrhized saplings with five types of Bulgarian truffles and a technology for establishing truffle orchards on abandoned lands; the new garden pea “Paldin” of the Maritsa Vegetable Crops Research Institute – Plovdiv. The garden pea variety “Paldin” is high-yielding, suitable for freezing, retaining excellent organoleptic and colour characteristics during sterilization and during six-month refrigerated storage.

Also awarded with certificates was the sunflower hybrid “Deveda” – a new Bulgarian variety of the Dobrudzha Agricultural Institute “General Toshevo”. The hybrid is high-yielding, with an oil content in the seeds of 51.7%, has no special cultivation requirements and the plants are resistant to a number of diseases. The winter barley “Zahir” of the Institute of Agriculture – Karnobat is high-yielding, with yields exceeding the average by 7%. It is characterized by good grain quality and resistance to cold and diseases.

The new maize varieties of the Maize Research Institute – Kneja were awarded with certificates. The maize hybrid “Kneja 317” is early, high-yielding, with an excellent phytosanitary profile with regard to economically important diseases and pests. The maize hybrid “Kneja 461” is medium-early, high-yielding, and stress-tolerant. The maize hybrid “Kneja 560” is a high-yielding hybrid from the medium-late maturity group, intended for grain production, stress-tolerant.

The new wine grape variety “Kristalen” also ranked among the winners. It was developed at the Institute of Agriculture and Seed Science – Ruse by hybridization of the varieties Pamid Ruse 1 and Kaylashki Misket in 1996. It is early-ripening, with vigorous growth and good productivity. The length of the vegetation period from bud burst to physiological ripeness of the grapes is about 150 days. Kristalen is a typical wine variety. The bunch is medium-sized (16 cm), conical, sometimes winged, medium dense, with a short to medium-long stalk (4–7 cm). The berry is medium-sized (14.53/13.51 mm), oval. The grapes have a pronounced fruity and muscat aroma, pleasant freshness and are suitable for the production of high-quality white wines, full-bodied and with good harmony between alcohol, sugars and titratable acids, as well as for the production of high-alcohol beverages.

The cherry variety “Alexton” of the Institute of Agriculture in Kyustendil was also awarded a certificate. The variety is characterized by large fruits, firm flesh and excellent taste, with good resistance to cracking.

In the section “Fertilizers and plant protection products for agriculture” the jury’s award went to the fungal insecticide Naturalis with active substance *Beauveria bassiana* 2.3×10^7 live spores/ml or 0.0185 g, co-

formulants – vegetable oil, and foliar fertilizers of the company Amatica. The pheromone dispensers for pest control through mating disruption of butterflies also attracted attention.

In the section “Machinery, equipment and technologies for crop production” awards were given to a lavender harvesting header and an air-sieve separator of a Bulgarian company, and to a fruit grader of a Greek company.

The diet chocolate LyoCrunch

with vitamins, collagen peptides from beef bone broth, biologically active extracts, prebiotic, freeze-dried fruits and without added sugar received the ovations of the committee. The product was developed by the Institute of Cryobiology and Food Technologies.

The Institute of Soil Science, Agrotechnologies and Plant Protection “N. Pushkarov” – Sofia was awarded a plaque for the development of new coatings with high hardness, wear resistance and tribological efficiency through electro-spark and flame spraying.

The chair of the competition commission was the Deputy Minister of Agriculture Yanko Ivanov. The jury's decisions were announced at an official ceremony at the Park Hotel “Sankt Peterburg” in Plovdiv on 21 February.