

Türkiye's New Fig Variety Could Revolutionize Health-Conscious Snacking

The variety could help Türkiye increase dried fig production from 70,000 to 100,000 tons within a decade, reinforcing its position as the world's top exporter.

İZMİR, TURKEY, May 28, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Türkiye, the world leader in dried fig production and exports, has achieved a breakthrough with its R&D efforts, yielding promising results with a new variety called "Siyah Orak" (Black Sickle).



New fig variety named: Siyah Orak

A research project aimed at identifying and commercializing fig varieties with the highest health benefits has revealed that the Siyah Orak fig is rich in phenolic compounds, known for their cancer-preventive properties.

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The biggest reason why this black fig has been so emphasized is that we have very unusual expectations in terms of health effects.”

Prof. Dr. Ahmet Yemenicioğlu

The study, conducted in partnership with the Erbeyli Fig Research Institute (under Türkiye's Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry), Ege University, and the Izmir Institute of Technology, analyzed figs from an experimental orchard owned by Sunny Fruit Company (K.F.C. Food). Initial findings indicate that the Siyah Orak variety is more resistant to mold-related toxins like aflatoxin compared to other types.

A New Player in the Global Market

Türkiye predominantly exports the Sarılop variety of dried figs, grown mainly in the western provinces of Aydın and İzmir, generating around \$300 million annually from approximately 67,000 tons of exports. However, Sunny Fruit, a leading Turkish dried fruit exporter, has been working to diversify production with new varieties to meet growing global demand.

The Siyah Orak fig, identified through a TÜBİTAK (Scientific and Technological Research Council of Türkiye)-supported project, stands out for its high polyphenol and antioxidant content. Its deep color comes from anthocyanins, pigments linked to anti-diabetic, anti-cancer, anti-inflammatory, and antimicrobial effects.

Birol Celep, Chairman of Sunny Fruit, likened the introduction of Siyah Orak to "a new player entering the field." He emphasized plans for integrated production with local farmers, using a contract-based model to expand cultivation in the Northern Aegean region.

A Strong Competitor to U.S. "Black Mission" Figs

Celep noted that while Türkiye dominates the global dried fig trade with Sarılop, it has yet to tap into the black dried fig market, where the U.S. "Black Mission" variety leads. The Siyah Orak, with its lower sugar content and higher antioxidant levels, could challenge this dominance, particularly in the U.S. and Asia-Pacific markets.

Sustainable Expansion with Farmers

Sunny Fruit has begun mass-producing saplings through tissue culture, targeting about 1000 acres initially. Celep assured farmers of guaranteed purchases, offering financing and technical support without upfront costs.

Prof. Dr. Fatih Şen of Ege University Faculty of Agriculture, part of the research team, said the Siyah Orak's high phenolic content will boost its global appeal. "This isn't about replacing Sarılop but adding a premium product that can command higher prices," he explained.

Health Benefits and Market Potential

Prof. Dr. Ahmet Yemenicioğlu from Izmir Institute of Technology Department of Food Engineering highlighted the fig's exceptional health properties, including pectin for digestive health and anthocyanins for anti-cancer and cardiovascular benefits. Early tests also suggest the Siyah Orak's natural resistance to aflatoxin, a major export barrier.

Yemenicioğlu predicts the variety could help Türkiye increase dried fig production from 70,000 to 100,000 tons within a decade, reinforcing its position as the world's top exporter.

Türkiye's place in the world dried fig market

According to the International Nut and Dried Fruit Council Foundation (INC), the export of dried figs from Türkiye accounted for 67,000 metric tons in 2023 which is the largest producer.

Turkish figs dominate local and international markets due to their superior quality and large-scale production.

According to the International Nut and Dried Fruit Council Foundation, Türkiye accounted for 49% of the total exports of dried fruits. Therefore, the high production and export potential of dried figs in the region drives the market growth of the produce during the forecast period.

About Sunny Fruit

Sunny Fruit (K.F.C. Food), one of Türkiye's leading exporters in the food sector, operates 2 factories in Izmir with approximately 1,200 employees. The company produces dried fruits, sun-dried tomatoes, and pickled peppers, exporting to 63 countries worldwide. With an annual export volume of around \$100 million, the company is also known for its sustainable agriculture projects carried out in partnership with producer cooperatives.

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