

## OrchardWorld trials new pear varieties

---



Top-fruit supplier OrchardWorld has planted a new £25,000 concept orchard which will trial four new pear varieties in the UK.

The ultimate aim of the concept orchard, featuring new "premium" varieties Delsanne, Gourmande, Verdi, and Elliott, is to increase yields, making production more profitable for the grower.

The trees in the new orchard have been planted one metre apart which it is hoped will create in a greater output per hectare than typically seen in the UK.

The orchard has been planted at Rankins Farm in Maidstone, Kent, where grower Tony Sunnucks produces apples, pears, rhubarb and raspberries.

The farm is already home to Sainsbury's Concept Apple Orchard, the first of its kind, which was planted in 2006. The results of this project have been significant, doubling the yields usually seen in UK apple orchards. In 2009, 40 tonnes of apples per hectare were harvested from the concept orchard, compared to typical yields of around 20 tonnes under normal systems. It is hoped that around 50 tonnes of apples per hectare will be produced next year.

Sunnucks will manage the orchard, working closely with Dutch agronomists, Fruit Consult. It is hoped a small volume of fruit can be harvested in 2011, with yields expected to increase steadily over the next five years to 60 tonnes per hectare. The project has been fully funded by OrchardWorld with an investment of around £25,000.

The company's technical director Mike Jobbins said: "We see the pear market as a great sales opportunity. We are very keen to reinvigorate the category and offer some genuine innovation to help grow the sales of British pears."