



## Bedfordshire Onion Growers are crying for Joy

There were tears in the eyes of the staff at Bedfordshire Growers on Tuesday night, but fortunately not from the onions for which they are famed. The consortium were celebrating after they scooped a farming 'Oscar' award having been proclaimed Vegetable Grower of the Year at star spangled ceremony held at the Grand Connaught Rooms in London.

This annual event is sponsored by Horticulture Week magazine and Bedfordshire Growers won their accolade for the major contribution they have made to the British Onion market. Over the last 50 years, the consortium have pioneered the introduction of new varieties of the tear-jerking vegetable and were responsible for introducing the now popular red onion to the UK



market and for developing the less pungent SupaSweet onion to suit people with a more delicate taste. They have also been at the forefront of developing high-tech storage techniques and it's thanks to Bedfordshire Growers that high quality British onions are now available to the British public through the year.

But it's not just onions that are Bedfordshire Growers claim to fame. In the 1990's they branched out into salad vegetables. It was their foresight of the changing market in the UK for greater choice and their innovative approach to new varieties that Gem Hearts, Hearts of Romaine, Red Mini Cos and Sweet Gem varieties are now found on the shelves of our favourite supermarkets.

Bedfordshire Growers' managing director Stephen Hedderly said, "It is a great honour to receive this award, especially as last year we celebrated our 50th anniversary. It is a fitting tribute for all of the hard work, dedication and innovation our growers and staff have put in since the business was formed back in 1963"

ends

**Date** 5<sup>th</sup> March 2014

**Editor's notes**

High resolution image available on request

**More about Bedfordshire Growers**

Founded in 1963 Bedfordshire Growers started from a small wooden hut on a 17 acre site near Biggleswade. It was formed as a co-operative of local farmers and horticulturalists business to promote the highest standards of crop marketing and presentation that customers demand. The business focuses on packing and distributing the traditional Bedfordshire vegetable crops of onions and potatoes.

The first packhouse was constructed on the site in 1966, but has expanded and now includes three packing houses fitted with the latest crop grading and packing equipment, cold stores and long term controlled atmosphere stores. The business occupies a 98 acres site which includes adjacent farmland. Bedfordshire Growers currently employs over 35 full time staff, which is supplemented by up to 60 temporary staff for grading and packing during peak periods.

Still a grower-owned consortium, the group's success has attracted growers from wider fields and Bedfordshire Growers now distributes root and salad crops from growers throughout the Eastern Counties and Spain to leading supermarkets, multiple retail outlets, wholesale food services and food processors.

The company also operates a farm shop, café and country store on the site which has an annual turnover in excess of £1 million.

**For further information**

**Technical information**

Stephen Hedderly e-mail: [stephen.hedderly@bedgrow.co.uk](mailto:stephen.hedderly@bedgrow.co.uk) Tel: 01767 319224

**Media information**

Colin Caldicott Ultimedia Public Relations

e-mail: [colin@ultimediapr.co.uk](mailto:colin@ultimediapr.co.uk) Tel: 01767 601470