For years, Alan Cleaver—like his father before him—was a potato guy. After cutting his teeth working for a larger grower, he eventually struck out on his own, starting a spreading company, then a fertilizer sales business and eventually farming 20 to 30 acres of potatoes and a couple hundred acres of wheat and corn.

As consolidation forced smaller potato growers out of the market, Cleaver made the switch to onions. He started small, but slowly and surely built the business. Today Cleaver’s Columbia Basin Onion farms approximately 1,500 acres (607 ha) of processing and fresh onions year round. And after years of sending his onions to other sheds, he is now investing in a state-of-the-art fresh shed that will allow him to pack all of his 1.5 million bags that he had previously sent to other plants.

“In one word: the reason was ‘control,’” Cleaver explains. “It was time, we’ve steadily grown our operation to where we needed our own shed to give us better control over how we reach some of the better markets and work with the better clients.”

Cleaver anticipates maintaining his acreage and selling to the same customers, but hopes the reduced costs and freight issues will strengthen his bottom line. As part of the expansion, he also hired onion shed veteran Gary Atkin to assist with sales.

The new shed will feature the absolute latest in technology for sizing and grading. “Because I’ve got my production in place, the shed is going up as a modern facility,” he says. “The plant is all new, the equipment is all new. It’s not a shed that’s been added onto over the years.”

While Cleaver expects that he will pack for a few other growers, Columbia Basin Onion’s established year-round onion program delivers enough supply to keep the new shed busy. “Freight’s gotten so high that year-round programs make a lot of sense,” he said. “The quality of the varieties and storages that give me the temperature control and air we need allow us to provide product year-round.”

Cleaver, who grows several Nunhems varieties (including Granero, Renegade, Cometa and Montero), may have begun his career in potatoes, but it’s onions he’s focused on now.
Bringing new, innovative onion varieties to market is a huge endeavor. As with any large undertaking, it requires a team effort in order to be successful.

One of the members of this team that often goes unnoticed are our trial specialists. The trial specialists work with growers, sales specialists and product specialists to get new and existing varieties in the ground for real-world trials. They follow these trials through each step, documenting each’s various traits and overall success.

If everything goes well in these trials, the trial specialists will work with the rest of Nunhems’ dedicated Onion Crop Team to determine whether the variety should be elevated in our systems, with the goal of eventually becoming a commercial variety. It’s an important position. So important, in fact, that Nunhems has recently hired three new trial specialists: Ashley Southerland & Bryan Bair in the USA and Esteban Chavez in Mexico as a part of an overall effort to increase the number of trial specialists we have on staff.

The continuity of Nunhems’ onion breeding program has made it an industry leader. And it has resulted in some truly innovative genetics with the potential to be industry game-changers. Varieties with better yields and better plant health that produce onions with better flavor, size, color, storability and single-centeredness.

Having the genetics is one thing. Proving they’ll deliver as promised is another. Our trial specialists are making certain Nunhems does just that.

**FEATURED VARIETY: ANILLO**

Nunhems’ newest commercial variety, Anillo, is a Spanish onion with better single centers than Vaquero and better leaf architecture than Arcero.

**Areas of Adaptability:** Antelope Valley, Central California, Colorado, Treasure Valley, Columbia Basin

**Daylength Type (“Latitude”):** Long (38° – 48°)

**Maturity (approx. days):** 120

**Skin Color:** Golden Brown

**Pink Root Resistance:** Intermediate (IR)

**Bulb Size:** Jumbo

**Storage:** 4-6 months

**Bolting Tolerance:** 4—Very Good (scale of 1-5)

**Shape:** Globe

**Fusarium Resistance (Foc):** Intermediate (IR)

**% of Single Centers:** Very High (scale of medium to very high)

**Pungency:** Pungent (scale of very mild to pungent)

To confirm that this variety is appropriate for your growing region—including your micro-climate — please contact your local sales specialist.
China Working Hard to Keep Up with Demand.

The onion business, along with just about every other agricultural crop, is booming in China. The reason is simple: supplies can’t keep pace with rising demand. The result is rising commodity prices across the country.

The primary factor in the increase in demand—a rising middle class—has been well documented. But according to Xiang Weiyong, Nunhems’ Country Sales Manager for China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, the real driver is the Chinese desire for healthy eating.

“People like to eat healthy food such as onion,” he said.

As prices have increased, more growers have entered the onion market to meet demand. Recognizing that many have varying degrees of experience in growing the crop, the local Nunhems team stepped in to offer to educate them.

“Nunhems has guided many farmers to hybrid onion varieties,” Weiyong said. “We’ve taught them how to use plastic film to cover the land, and how to transplant to replace direct sowing.”

Because the country is still working to grow its knowledge and expertise, especially in large-scale production, the overall production of onion has been unpredictable. “Some years production is very huge, some years it is a shortage,” Weiyong said.

The bottom line? Onion demand is growing in China and Nunhems is working diligently to help our customers there—and around the world—seize the opportunity.

Zwiebelkuchen (German Onion Cake)
By Karen Gilman, Dano’s Heuriger

This recipe is a classic quiche that goes well with a nice Riesling. It’s perfect if you are looking to put an overstock of onions to good use.

For the dough
• 5 ½ cups all purpose flour
• ¾ tablespoon yeast
• 2 cups warm water
• ½ cup olive oil
• ½ tablespoon salt

Mix all ingredients together in a mixer with the dough hook until a firm ball forms, about 10 minutes. Let rise in a lightly greased bowl until doubled in size, about one hour. Grease a 12-inch round springform cake pan. On a floured surface, roll out the dough to a ¼ inch thickness and lay into the pan.

For the onion mixture
• ½ cup butter or a mix of rendered bacon fat and butter
• 3 pounds onions, sliced
• 1 teaspoon Kirshwasser (cherry brandy), optional
• 1 cup heavy cream
• 1 egg, beaten
• Salt and ground pepper to taste
• Bacon, duck or chicken cracklings, optional

Melt butter or fat in a large frying pan. Add onions, stir and lower heat to medium-low. Sauté until lightly caramelized, about thirty to forty minutes. Let cool, and then add the rest of the ingredients. Spread the onion mixture over dough and let rest for 45 minutes. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Bake for 45 minutes. Let rest for 15-20 minutes before removing from pan and serving.
MEXICO FIELD DAYS RAMP UP.

Nunhems holds six onion field days each year in the states of Puebla and Morelos early in the year; Chihuahua and Zacatecas in May and June; and Guanajuato and Michoacan in November and December. Each feature short, intermediate and long day varieties appropriate for their markets.

The field days provide a great opportunity for growers to learn about new varieties and existing commercial varieties—their performance, growing techniques and more. Growers can evaluate the varieties for themselves and evaluate the cost/benefit of each hybrid which is the goal, according to Mexico-based Juan Carlos Iniguez Sanchez, Nunhems Onion Account Manager.

“The field days provide a great opportunity for growers to learn about new varieties and existing commercial varieties.”

In addition, many field days address other challenges growers face. Companies like Bayer CropScience are invited to discuss how their products help solve pest and disease problems.

Any way you slice it, Nunhems onion field days offer a great way to expand your knowledge first-hand. Contact your local sales specialist to learn more about field days in your area.

For more information contact your local sales specialist or Nunhems Customer Service at (800) 733-9505.

About Nunhems
The vegetable seed business of Bayer CropScience operates under the name of Nunhems. Nunhems is the global specialist in vegetable genetics and services. As a globally integrated group of teams, Nunhems builds unique customer relationships and shares products, concepts and expertise with the professional horticultural production industry and supply chain. The portfolio of Nunhems consists of 2,500 varieties in 28 vegetable crops, including leading varieties of carrot, cucumber, leek, lettuce, melon, onion, pepper, tomato and watermelon. With more than 1,700 employees, Nunhems is present in all major vegetable production areas in the world.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Be sure to read the full Limitation of Liability and Disclaimer of Warranties found at www.nunhemsusa.com or available upon request from Nunhems USA, Inc. (Nunhems) before buying or using Nunhems seeds. Technical data, comments, advice, testimonials and graphic or other representations of the seeds and fruit there from included herein are offered without charge or warranty of any kind either express or implied, including, but not limited to, fitness for a particular purpose and merchantability. Technical data shown is solely a compilation of observations from various geographic areas, conditions, and laboratory tests. Growing results, including varietal characteristics and performance, vary depending upon a wide range of environmental conditions and growing practices. Nunhems DOES NOT GUARANTEE growing success and disclaims any warranty and disclaims all liability for such data and advice.

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