

Perfectly customised Chrysants

Rossi is one of Floritec's established Santini brands.

Floritec has quickly made a name in the floral industry by breeding durable, disease and pest resistant, high yielding *Chrysanthemum* varieties that require small inputs but make a big impression.

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Floritec's rapid rise to prominence in fewer than fifteen years is truly remarkable. It came from a relatively unknown *Chrysanthemum* breeder to a tried and trusted supplier of established brands such as Calimero, Rossi and Ellison Santinis and Da Vinci pot mums and achieved customers worldwide.

The modern *Chrysanthemum* occupies an outstanding number two position among the world's top three of most traded and grown cut flowers.

In 2020, there was about 320,034ha under glasshouses or in the open dedicated to *Chrysanthemums*. In that same year, the value of global *Chrysanthemum* trade amounted to €255 million, according to *AIPH International Statistics Flowers & Plants 2021*.

At Royal FloraHolland, the world's largest flower hub, the number of supplied *Chrysanthemum* stems in 2021 was 810 million spray *Chrysanthemums*, 337 million Santinis, and 131 million disbuds. The stability of sales, the market size and security was impulse enough for Floritec to



Picture-perfect: Chrysanthemum 'Lentini'.

tackle the sophisticated world of *Chrysanthemums*, which by no means was unknown. Each of the original four founding partners within Floritec had a vast knowledge base and experience in *Chrysanthemum* breeding. An excellent combination of youth, experience, team spirit, and passion helped the newcomer quickly gain ground over its competitors.

FLAT MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

From the onset, Floritec opted for a

flat management structure; the lines of communication are short, making the firm responsive to change and decision-making quicker.

The business model reflects the company's mission values which read as follows *"...providing the world's happiness through an array of beautiful flowers and pot plants. Our varieties grow under a wide range of climatic conditions with the least possible chemical use, thus contributing to more sustainable production. We want our flowers and plants to inspire people of all generations, to value and preserve the beauty of nature."*

Floritec's rebranding effort from last summer puts people first. It ensures that the company stays fresh whilst keeping its core values at heart. The design incorporates breeding expertise, propagation, markets, reliability, and good customer service.

The new logo combines a human figure to connect with Floritec and its customers worldwide. At the same time, a test tube symbolises high tech plant breeding and a constant flow of innovative products – including product diversifying pot aster and pot celosia – as a basis for the company's ongoing success.

STANDING OUT FROM THE CROWD

Floritec isn't the only one breeding Chrysanthemums, so they do a number of things to differentiate themselves in the marketplace.

The Floritec headquarters is in Woubrugge. It does not include the usual glasshouse facilities and test greenhouses to manage numerous genetic material lines to produce marketable varieties.

Floritec boss Jeroen Ravensbergen elaborates, "Modern plant breeding is research, time and capital intensive. As a result, the barriers to entry are also high. When we started our company, the competition was fierce, with competitors having more resources and more established names.

Our pockets were insufficient to invest in extensive research and testing facilities. So, the company decided to conduct plant breeding programmes in situ – that is inside the grower's greenhouses across the world."

The obstacle Floritec faced early on ended up helping the company build its customer base and positive reputation. Ravensbergen says, "Without this adversity, essential elements like standing out and establishing industry expertise would have been much harder to achieve."

Floritec's unique business

approach led to perfectly customised Chrysanthemums, including genetic improvements such as yield gain, disease resistance, shelf life, eye appeal and climate resilience. Each variety results from the intensive collaboration between Floritec's breeders and growers, identifying the flowers' traits as desirable for growers, traders, retailers, and end consumers alike.

CHRYSANTHEMUMS ARE EVERYWHERE

There is no better timing for custom made Chrysanthemums. After years of alleged 'anti-Chrysanthemumism,' the golden flower's popularity is currently rising again with shoppers.

Research shows that the younger generation appreciates the Chrysanthemum's versatility and long shelf life.

Undoubtedly, the Covid-19 pandemic has had a huge impact: the pandemic's beginning saw the closure of garden centres and flower shops, causing a dramatic drop in demand and millions of binned flowers.

The story is very different now, with Chrysanthemums everywhere, from luxury fashion to the high street. Commenting on the state of the Chrysanthemum trade nearly two years after the first cases of Covid 19, Ravensbergen says, "The Omicron variant impacted people's decision to travel, especially because as new

travel restrictions were once again put in place. As a result, they spend more time at home and buy more flowers." People's relationship with all things nature has emerged as one of the sources of pleasure during lockdowns. GenX and Millennials are more likely to purchase flowers than in the pre-Corona era. Often, they settle for seeking out the latest trending products that are distinct and cool. As such, it is no surprise that across all Chrysanthemum categories, Floritec's cheery Santinis and artisan disbuds are perfectly on-trend.

GOING GLOBAL

Floritec works with high-quality Chrysanthemum growers worldwide to bring them the very best new flowers on the market, together with tried and tested more established varieties.

Whether these are Colombian growers serving the USA big box stores, specialist growers in Poland or Japan, or retail growers in the Netherlands, the breeding company says it can meet the divergent customer requirements from different growers.

In Poland, for example, growers revel in Santinis, in particular in Floritec's Calimero Santinis. This series provides them with new levels of crop security. Currently, Calimeros (belonging to the pompom type) are available in nine colours, all of which transport well and stand out for their



Pretty in pink:
Chrysanthemum 'Maipo'

optimum vigour and consistent yield. Feedback from Poland’s 2019 Chrysanthemum Open Days learnt that Floritec is quickly gaining market share in its pot mum segment too. Popular varieties are double decorative flowers with ‘Da Vinci Orange’, ‘Dynamic’, ‘Serene White’, ‘Serene Yellow’, ‘Cozy’, ‘Coldplay’, and ‘Mixed Dream Pink’. It is safe to say that Floritec’s Da Vinci series currently ranks among the best-selling Chrysanthemum genetics in Poland.

Its top-selling Santini Ellison series is available in seven (pastel) colours and featuring multi-petalled pompoms. Santini Rossi is the name of another favourite Santini series with Polish growers. The series includes single type blooms with a flat centre and radiating rows of petals.

SPAIS FIORI SICILY

Alongside Poland, Japan, the Netherlands, and Colombia, Italy is also a hotspot for Chrysanthemum production. Michele Alfano from Sicily-based Spais Fiori takes great joy and pride in growing 15 Floritec cultivars.

In Acate, neighbouring Italy’s largest Chrysanthemum producer Mediterranean, his company grows between 14-15 million stems per year under 13ha of poly-roofed greenhouses.

The Alfano family is from Pompei, near Napels. In this family, the floral trade and production are important; Michele’s father Giovanni has run several cut Chrysanthemum nurseries, while his uncle runs a floral wholesale business.

Michele is deeply attached to both his place of birth and the *Isola del Sole* (island of the sun), which became his

second homeland. Chrysanthemum remains Spais Fiori’s core product. Yet, today they have expanded their business to include Statice, Lisianthus, Lilium (asiatics and longiflorums), Dianthus barbatus, and Callistephus chinensis Gypsophila also comprise a portion of their business.

Social changes and consumer behaviour developments motivate Spais Fiori towards product diversification. Michele explains, “You are absolutely right that in predominantly Catholic Southern Italy, Chrysanthemums will mainly go to cemeteries. However, it is important to factor in that the tradition of decorating the graves with Chrysanthemum is slowly dying out with the younger generations. This development forces us to develop new sales strategies and markets.”

Spais Fiori’s primary customer base remains wholesalers and smaller vendors. Their most vital customer base is in Sicily, but buyers come from as far away as Calabria, Campania, Lazio and Tuscany.

ON THE SAME PAGE

Michele took his early education at Wageningen Horticultural University in the Netherlands, and it was there that he forged many business relationships. He notes significant differences among work-related values between Italy and the Netherlands but feels that he and Floritec have been on the same page since they first met 11 years ago.

He comments, “Their breeding programme is simple, but extremely intelligent, and develops improved varieties to meet the specific needs of

growers, each of them operating in unique, sometimes extreme, growing conditions. Whether growers are in Western and Southern Europe, South America or Asia, Floritec will always try to put itself in the grower’s place, focusing on geography, greenhouse tech, soil, water and climate. Plant breeding under extreme growing conditions will ultimately lead to reliable varieties for the grower. Floritec’s customised breeding approach has allowed us to continuously expand our product portfolio, adding new colours and flower shapes, all

MAVERICK

White and yellow are the world’s best-selling Chry Floritec’s latest Santini series Maverick, which deb the new Maverick as world-class Santinis in golde Maverick Sunny) colours.

The news of the moment is Maverick White. Mave petals and features a long-lasting and fresh green more eccentric florals in a bouquet, and this contr



(Above) Spais Fiori, Sicily. (Right) Floritec boss Jeroen Ravensbergen says, “Without this adversity, essential elements like standing out and establishing industry expertise would have been much harder to achieve.”

adapted to thrive in the conditions that prevail in Acate.”

There are many characteristics where breeding can manipulate the ideal selection for the economics of Chrysanthemum growing.

Michele mentions the criteria of aesthetic value, bud count, flowering response, stem weight, disease resistance, PGR demand, shelf life, uniformity, plant density, and heat resistance and demand. He elaborates, “Climate-resilience is vital when considering the skyrocketing energy prices. A new variety capable of adapting itself

Chrysanthemum colours. They are well-represented in the market reported last year. Chrysanthemum experts describe the variety ‘Maverick White’ (Santini Maverick Gold) and yellow (Santini

‘Maverick White’ is unusual because of its snowy white petals and a ‘heart’ shape. This new variety accentuates brighter, more vibrant centres that are warmly welcomed by florists worldwide.



to lower temperatures without heating or one that can withstand extreme heat - summer temperatures in Sicily easily rise to 40 degrees Celsius - without the need of greenhouse cooling makes for us the perfect Chrysanthemum.”

FULL-COLOUR RANGE

Spais Fiori has a full-colour range of Sicilian grown Chrysanthemums available all year round, including 15 Floritec varieties. “Without any doubt, ‘Vallato’, ‘Vallato Sunny’, ‘Maipo’, and ‘Excite’ are proving most popular with our customers. But there is also high demand for ‘Summerflame’, ‘Georgia’, ‘Marshmello’ and ‘Lentini’ whose different colours spice up our product range. It is easy to mention several other high potential varieties that we trail each year in our glasshouses. We may end up with one of the broadest ranges in Chrysanthemums, from 25 up to 30 varieties.”

SEIKOEN

In an era of global markets, international competition is fierce. The 2019 merger between Inochio Seikoen and Floritec helped both companies to strengthen their market position and combined the oldest, most respected names in the Chrysanthemum business with the ‘new kid on the block’. The merger gave Floritec access to a rich Chrysanthemum genetics and breeders catalogue. It also allows for more significant investments in R&D as sister company Inochio Agriculture Research Center has ultra-modern R&D facilities for diagnosing pests and diseases and pests and water and soil analysis.

Inochio Seikoen has deep roots in Chrysanthemum breeding and propagating. The company has been developing innovative

Chrysanthemums for over 100 years. Operating from its headquarters in Hiroshima, the company has brought over 5,000 cultivars to the global market ever since. Its people, market knowledge, extensive distribution, product range and support to growers keep the company at the top of the industry.

Inochio Seikoen’s top-selling varieties are the white ‘Sei no Issei’ and yellow ‘Sei no Kosai’ launched in 2009 and 2013. True to century-old traditions, the Japanese use white Chrysanthemums for funerals and Obon celebrations, commemorating and honouring ancestors.

The ‘Sei no Issei’ quickly rose to prominence because it blooms from early summer until late autumn; it is also heat resistant and does not require much disbudding work.

In Japan’s buoyant Chrysanthemum market, Inochio Seikoen has massive breeding expertise and data based on scientific research by Japan’s National Agriculture and Food Research Organisation. Inochio Seikoen is part of Inochio Holdings, a business consortium comprising 15 companies: carnation breeder Fujijplants and Chrysanthemum grower and trader Inochio Flora.

The Inochio business has headquarters in Aichi Prefecture. It has come a long way from its humble beginnings in 1909 with its founding family - the Ishiguro - starting a pharmacy that later became a prominent supplier of fertilisers, pesticides, greenhouse sundries, seeds, young plants and then into a DIY store and garden centre. In the world of Chrysanthemums, Seikoen is associated with its once highly successful ‘Reagan’ series, launched in 1988 in collaboration with former Dutch breeder’s consortium CBA, including Sunfield Holland and Van Zanten Cuttings.

CHRYSANTHEMUM IS QUINTESSENTIALLY JAPANESE

Chrysanthemum translates in Japanese as kiku. The flower is deeply anchored in Japanese culture. The imperial family is known as the ‘chrysanthemum throne’, and today the flower symbolises the Japanese Emperor.

Chrysanthemum breeding in Japan has been widespread since the 17th century. A tradition the Japanese highly cherish. In autumn, for example, many villages and towns across the country host an annual chrysanthemum breeding contest.