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Newly developed tomato and pepper varieties distinguished IZK "Maritsa" and CRSBB as innovators and inventors for 2026.

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Two prestigious awards were received by the Maritsa Vegetable Crops Institute (MVCI) and the Center of Plant Systems Biology and Biotechnology (CPSBB) in Plovdiv for the development of new vegetable varieties created through modern breeding and applied methods. The new developments are generating significant interest among producers and specialists in the agricultural sector, and are also receiving positive feedback from consumers due to their taste qualities and cultivation resilience.

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An award for innovation in the field of sustainable agriculture was given to the new pepper variety "Baltovska Kapia"**,** developed jointly by scientists from MVCI and CPSBB. The award was presented during the international exhibition "International Agricultural Exhibition AGRA 2026", which took place at the Plovdiv International Fair.

Additional recognition for scientific achievements was received by the two scientific institutes from the Union of Inventors in Bulgaria, which awarded a diploma and a gold medal for the new cherry tomato variety "Mini Miss" as a contribution to the field of breeding and innovation in vegetable production. The award was presented by the organization's chairman, Dr. Eng. Mario Hristov, to the director of MVCI, Prof. Daniela Ganeva, the director of CPSBB, Prof. Tsanko Gechev, and representatives of the research team involved in developing the new varieties.

Science in Support of Modern Vegetable Production

The development of the new varieties is the result of long-term collaboration between breeders, molecular biologists, and agronomists from the two institutes. Combining classical breeding with modern biotechnological approaches allows for the creation of varieties that meet modern requirements for resilience, quality, and marketability.

CPSBB and MVCI emphasize that the new developments are aimed at supporting the competitiveness of Bulgarian vegetable producers and creating high-quality local varieties adapted to the country's climatic conditions.

Tomato Variety "Mini Miss"

"Mini Miss" is a new high-yielding cherry tomato variety, distinguished by compact plants, uniform clusters, and attractive small fruits with excellent taste qualities. The fruits are bright red, with an average weight of about 12–15 g and a balanced sugar-to-acid ratio, making them suitable both for fresh consumption and for gourmet salads and dish decoration.

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Cherry tomato variety "Mini Miss"

The variety was developed with a focus on sustainable production – the plants show good adaptability to greenhouse and field cultivation conditions, stable yield, and increased resistance to some of the main tomato diseases. This makes it suitable for both professional producers and small farms and family homesteads.

Variety "Baltovska Kapia"

This is the first variety developed in Bulgaria with resistance to viral diseases. The variety belongs to the Large-fruited peppers subspecies, the Long peppers group, Kapia cultivar type.

New pepper variety "Baltovska Kapia" – awarded a diploma in the AGRA 2026 innovation competition

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It was created as a result of long-term complex breeding and improvement work at MVCI and, in recent years, jointly with the Center of Plant Systems Biology and Biotechnology (CPSBB) through hybridization between a resistant and a susceptible genotype to the tobacco mosaic virus from the breeders' collection, followed by multi-year backcrossing (over 20 years) with susceptible

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Kapia-type varieties (*C. annuum*) onto selected resistant plants in the backcross generations. This was followed by repeated selection for resistance, morphological, and agronomic traits. Participants in the creation of the variety are: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Velichka Todorova, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dimitrina Kostova-Protohristova, Chief Assist. Prof. Dr. Gancho Pasev, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ivanka Tringovska-Mendeva, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Stanislava Grozeva-Tileva, Chief Assist. Prof. Dr. Vesela Radeva-Ivanova, Assist. Penka Filova, Prof. Dr. Tsanko Gechev.





The plants are 55 to 75 cm tall, with indeterminate growth, a sturdy stem, and form two to three primary branches. They have anthocyanin coloration at the nodes, as well as on the hypocotyl in the seedling phase. The leaves are green, ovate, and pointed at the tip.