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Australia to grow Chinese anti-cancer fruit

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Singapore: University of Queensland (UQ) is soon going to globally launch a delicious berry-like ancient Chinese red bayberry fruit (Myrica rubra), also known as Yang Mei, following a licensing agreement with a Victorian-based grower-owned berry production and marketing company, Y V Fresh.

UniQuest, which is UQ's main research commercialization company, negotiated the deal after successful trials with growers along the Australian east coast, engagement with tree propagators, fruit marketing companies, and a number of fruit test marketing activities.

UniQuest MD, Mr David Henderson, said that the partnership between UniQuest, YV Fresh and Horticulture Australia (HAL) will facilitate establishing the red bayberry industry in Australia with Australian government and industry funding."UniQuest has licensed the UQ red bayberry Plant Breeders Rights (PBR) to Y V Fresh so that they and their sub-licensees can propagate trees for fruit production and sell that fruit."

Mr Henderson said that, "As a tree fruit crop red bayberry should cost less to produce, but can still command a premium retail price similar to blueberries and raspberries. These are important return on investment factors for attracting commercial partners." Furthermore, red bayberry show high levels of antioxidants and other potentially beneficial phytochemicals. The fruit is claimed to be anti-bacterial, anti-viral, anti-carcinogenic, anti-inflammatory, and anti-allergenic.

Red Bayberry has not been widely propagated as a commercial crop in countries other than China. However, Professor Daryl Joyce of UQ's School of Agriculture and Food Sciences has been selecting and evaluating new varieties in collaboration with colleagues overseas and in Australia, including from Queensland's Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. "Funding from the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) has been crucial for developing our varieties in readiness for commercialization - enabling a scoping study and the pilot research into germplasm evaluation, seed and vegetative propagation, agronomic and postharvest handling practices, and consumer acceptance," Professor Joyce said.