

New Zealand's Plant & Food Research has made 11 new large and export-oriented blueberry varieties available for the country's growers.

Three of the varieties are from the organization's own breeding program and eight licensed from Fall Creek Farm & Nursery in the U.S.

Of the new varieties, three are Southern Highbush, seven are Northern Highbush and one is Rabbiteye. The varieties produce large fruit with good flavour, with a range of seasonality across the collection. All show good adaptability to New Zealand conditions in trials to date.

"These new varieties offer a significant opportunity for New Zealand growers to improve their blueberry production and offer new, tasty blueberries to consumers at home and overseas," says Dr Gavin Ross, Group General Manager Marketing & Innovation

"The new varieties produce tasty berries with high consumer appeal, and grow well in New Zealand conditions. We hope the addition of these new varieties to the suite of plants available to growers will help expand the blueberry sector and increase export opportunities over the next decade."

Growers are invited to apply for a non-exclusive license to cultivate and grow the varieties for fruit production in New Zealand and for the marketing and sale of fruit worldwide. Growers who sign up to a license agreement will be able to place orders with authorized nurseries.

New Zealand currently produces 3,000 tonnes of blueberries from 640 hectares of land, earning \$39 million in exports. Plant & Food Research will gain royalty payments from the licensing arrangement, which will be used to further research that benefits New Zealand's agrifood industries.