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Suntory invests Â£920,000 into Ribena berry resilience

30 July 2025 | News

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Suntory Beverage & Food Great Britain and Ireland (SBF GB&I) has announced an investment of Â£920,000 over the next five years to continue its blackcurrant breeding programme with the James Hutton Institute. This investment will accelerate work to develop new varieties of berries that produce consistent yields in the face of climate challenges. They will be bred to withstand extreme weather, pests and diseases while preserving the signature Ribena taste that consumers know and love.

This year saw the warmest and driest spring on record, delivering more sunshine by June 2025 than the entirety of last year. These conditions led to the 2025 harvest season beginning a whole two weeks earlier than usual. While the abundant sunshine produced strong flowering and fruit, many farms struggled with severe water stress â?? underlining the urgent need for blackcurrant varieties that thrive in heat as well as drought.

Created in partnership with SBF GB&I, the James Hutton Institute breeding programme has several core objectives which focus on delivering consistent yields, resilience and the distinct Ribena flavour profile.

By developing blackcurrant varieties that can deliver consistent yields despite environmental stress, including limited winter chilling, heat, and drought, researchers aim to support more reliable flowering and fruit set even under unpredictable weather conditions. New field-based and laboratory tools will deliver earlier and more accurate yield forecasts, giving growers the confidence to plan around unpredictable or extreme weather events.