

A significant growth ahead for Australia's Kakadu plum industry

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Kindred Spirits Enterprises, Traditional Homeland Enterprises is among the groups participating in a three-year cooperative research Centre for developing Northern Australia project, launched at Darwin's Parliament House in early August.

The enterprise currently processes and sells Kakadu plum fruit, puree and powder products.

Farming together assisted Kindred Spirits Enterprises to support the Kakadu plum project it initiated in 2013 at the request of the Women's Centre and Traditional Owners in Wadeye, NT.

The project has since expanded to include other harvesting communities in the Northern Territory and Western Australia's Kimberley region.

Kindred Spirits Enterprises executive officer Ann Shanley said potential customers told the enterprise they wanted to use Kakadu plum in food products, cosmetics, nutraceuticals but they needed information about how to do it.

"Growing the market and increasing demand also creates opportunity for local indigenous harvesting communities to grow their enterprises and their local economy," she said.

"Farming together was truly helpful to us. They provided clarity around issues, and the consultant presented in a way that everyone could understand. Most importantly, all felt comfortable to ask questions. We wouldn't have been able to move forward as we have without the program," said Shanley.

The cooperative research project seeks to improve processing and storage methods, distribution of Kakadu plum products and provide training in harvesting, manufacturing and marketing.

Some of the potential commercial products which might result from this project include dehydrated products such as in breakfast cereals, energy and health bars, high-fibre products and bio-active rich extracts for natural preservation.

Farming Together program director Lorraine Gordon said the potential of this native crop would repay the commitment shown by these groups in the near future.

University of Queensland associate professor Yasmina Sultanbawa said the Kakadu plum industry offered significant opportunity for growth.

“Demand and growth for Kakadu plum products here and overseas is expected to be around 10 per cent annually, with significant opportunities emerging in the nutraceutical, supplement and pharmaceutical industries, so looking at how we can improve the value chain to better capture these new markets will be a key focus of this research,” said Sultanbawa.