

More blueberries from Scotland

✘ Scientists at the James Hutton Institute are undertaking research to find ways of growing blueberries in Scotland.

The Environment Secretary Roseanna Cunningham has announced new plant breeding technology being used in a Scottish Government funded research programme.

Blueberries grown in Scotland have increased by ten per cent but it is hoped that the new study will produce blueberry plants more suited to our climate.

The benefits of blueberries have been examined by the Rowett Institute for Nutrition and Health. They have proven that consuming a concentrated berry extract drink lowers glucose levels. It may help prevent and manage Type 2 diabetes if it is proven to work on a long term basis. Almost 300,000 Scots live with diabetes according to 2015 figures. Advice is that type 2 can be controlled with a healthy diet and regular physical activity.

Environment Secretary Roseanna Cunningham said:

“Blueberries are an increasingly popular fruit in the UK. They are widely considered to have health benefits and of course they count as one of the five a day for fruit and veg.

“Traditionally blueberries are imported to Scotland but this innovative research we are funding is using new technology to develop plants that are more suitable for the Scottish soil and climate as well as helping us to fully understand the health benefits of this fruit.

“Scottish blueberry production is already on the increase and this should help boost local production of this fruit – which

is better for the environment and also good news for our economy.”

Julie Graham, who leads on the blueberry breeding programme at the James Hutton Institute said:

“Cutting-edge plant breeding technology is enabling the James Hutton Institute to develop new blueberry cultivars. These cultivars, better suited to Scottish conditions, should enable an increase in the home-grown blueberry crop, which will be of benefit to Scottish soft fruit growers. Long term funding from the Scottish Government has been instrumental in supporting this research.”