

November 20, 2017

## Lesser known native vegies pass the taste test

Unique native produce could be the next buzz food with a consumer study pointing to a clear demand for Australian-grown vegetables that are not widely available through the nation's retailers.

Funded by Hort Innovation and conducted by Colmar Brunton, the research comprised the opinions of more than 1700 people via surveys, focus groups and interviews.

Hort Innovation chief executive John Lloyd said overall, the study showed that Australians have a sense of pride in native food, are curious about little-known produce varieties, and are largely keen to buy more.

"In Australia, we have more than 6000 different native food varieties, and many consumers have had limited exposure to many of them," he said.

"For this reason, in consultation with Aboriginal custodians and native food specialists, we took a deep dive into a selection of native vegetables to see what consumers found most appealing, and the findings were compelling."

The research – conducted online, in consumers' homes and at a dedicated sensory testing facility – uncovered a number of specific vegetables consumers favoured, providing an insight into potential opportunities for Australia's first peoples and growers.

The results showed people in the sample – particularly those aged 18 to 25 – were interested in eating vegetables that were previously unknown to them, especially when they had a high nutritional profile.

People were also more receptive to certain types of native vegetables when they were able to compare them to known varieties – such as kulyu, which is similar to the sweet potato.

Australian Native Foods & Botanicals chair Amanda Garner said around 40 edible native foods are commercially available in Australia, and that figure is tipped to rise.

"As the extraordinary health benefits and medicinal properties of unique Australian plants are being 'discovered' the market demand is sky high, especially from the national and international pharma and nutraceutical companies," she said. "Demand is far outstripping supply".

Ms Garner said key to success in growth in the industry is the integration of Indigenous cultural knowledge.

"Strengthening the various bush food industries' understanding and appreciation of the uniqueness and incredible array of Australian native species grown in our own backyard is also essential," she said.

Hort Innovation presented the findings of the study at a [Native Food Forum](#) in Adelaide today, which was jointly funded with ANFAB as part of the Farm Co-operatives and Collaboration Pilot Program ([Farming Together](#)).

See a summary of the consumer preference study findings [here](#).

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