

SUPERFRUIT CASE STUDY

disease, as well as some benefits related to cerebral performance.

New Zealand is currently the second biggest supplier of blackcurrants – accounting for around 3%-5% of the world's total blackcurrant supply. At present rates (about NZ\$1.00 (\$0.73/€0.54) per kilo over the entire NZ industry), NZ blackcurrants – even varieties with higher levels of anthocyanins – face significant price pressure from low-priced Polish blackcurrants. Polish yields are well above those of New Zealand's. In 2002-2004, for example, Poland produced a whopping 132,000 tonnes of blackcurrants on average (that's 70% of EU-25 production – according to the European Commission Agriculture and Rural Development) making the need for New Zealand producers' strong differentiation on health even more palpable.

The result of a focus on health is that the market for NZ blackcurrants remains strong because where they are being introduced – Japan and South East Asia – they're becoming known as a higher value product.

Whether the Japanese cassis market will eventually reach the ¥10 billion (\$83 million/€62 million) mark, and whether cassis will “take off” as an alternative to expensive bilberry and blueberry extracts and finished products, depends to a large degree on how many strong and competent players join Meiji Seika in the development, manufacture and marketing of blackcurrant products.

At present, Meiji's major role in the manufacture/import of blackcurrant extracts and its domination of the finished blackcurrant product market makes it difficult for any companies wishing to experiment with cassis. When Meiji puts Cassis-*i* on the shelves of convenience stores, for example, other Japanese beverage companies are reluctant to compete.

All going well, when the partners are able to substantiate health claims, NZ blackcurrants will feature in even more health supplements and functional foods across the globe than is currently the case. It could very well be that in the near future, what was once an obscure, little-known berry in Japan may become one of the stars of the superfruit list.

Cassis feature from *Nikkei Health* June 2005*



“Do you know blackcurrants? The fruit is black, sweet and sour, high in polyphenol content and has the effect of improving blood circulation. Blackcurrants have an effect on cold and stiffness in the shoulders, and fatigue of the eyes ... I bring to your attention and introduce the power of blackcurrants.” – Nikkei Health, June 2005.

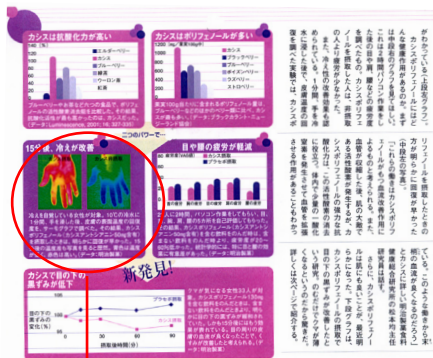
The text at the bottom right of this Japanese magazine feature on cassis highlights “sagging eyes” as a skin/beauty related problem. The caption reads:

Once you have sagging eyes the problem is difficult to eradicate. Conventional treatments are:

- Massaging around your eyes
- Concealing with cosmetics
- Using high frequency thermotherapy

Even if you massage, it does not disappear immediately. Cosmetic creams only hide the effect and non-conventional high frequency thermotherapy does not have a decisive effect.

I have discovered a new simple method! The detail is in the next page.



Graphs, barcharts, figures and professionals' testimonials are characteristic of promotional material in Japanese health magazines.



provides an explanation of the thermograph:

[Blackcurrants] have improved poor blood circulation. After having dipped a hand into cold water for one minute in the experiment which investigated recovery of skin temperature, the recovery was clearly more rapid [when blackcurrant had been consumed].

“This work is based on the bloodflow improvement action of blackcurrant polyphenols”.

And other excerpts provide quotes from a Meiji research scientist:
... although the oxygen radical, which is a powerful enemy of the skin, occurs after a blood vessel contracts, the powerful antioxidant activity of blackcurrants is useful for the elimination of this oxygen radical. It also turns out that there is an action where a small amount of carbon monoxide is generated in the body, and makes a blood vessel extend – improving blood flow. Senior research scientist Matsumo of the Meiji Seika Health Food Research Institute outlined this in a blackcurrant talk.

*(translation and notes prepared on behalf of BCNZL by Keith Owen International Marketing Ltd.).