

Hawaii Business

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Fruitful Operation

Maui

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Photo: Courtesy of Noni Maui

Noni Biotech International (dba Noni Maui) recently opened a 3,600-square-foot, high-tech laboratory in Haiku, Maui, designed to research the anticancer components found in the Hawaiian noni fruit. Word of the noni's medicinal benefits has sparked interest all over the world, resulting in a 50 percent spike in Noni Maui's 2008 annual revenues over the previous year.

Scientists have been able to isolate key ingredients in noni juice that inhibit angiogenesis, a process that causes new blood-vessel growth, which often leads to cancer. Halting this process starves cancerous tumors of essential nutrients they need to grow, allowing the body's own immune system to help fight the disease.

Marie Laure Ankaoua, vice president and COO for Noni Maui, says noni juice has a long history of safe human use and has been used for centuries by Polynesians to deal with various health problems, such as hypertension and diabetes. She adds that today's users also cite noni's ability to slow the aging process and boost the immune system.

Among some of the products Noni Maui manufactures are noni powder, capsules, lotion and sunscreen. The company says all of the noni fruit used in its products are processed using traditional Hawaiian methods, which ensures 100 percent purity and potency. No pesticides, herbicides or synthetic fertilizers are used in growing the noni.

President and CEO David Backstrom invests a share of the company's profits into cancer research. Over the past several years, Noni Maui has been working with the University of Hawaii's Cancer Research Center and the Louisiana State University's Medical Research Center. Noni Maui is also certified by the state of Hawaii as a qualified high-tech business, making it eligible for various tax credits.

Noni Maui is completing the first phase of a private equity placement from investors. The money raised will be used to finance continued research and development and expansion of its manufacturing facilities.