



For Immediate Release

Vineland collaborates on innovation team aiming to expand berry production in Canada

VINELAND STATION, Ontario, September 29, 2022 – Vineland Research and Innovation Centre (Vineland) is proud to collaborate as one of 15 teams granted a Spark Award, the initial award phase of the Homegrown Innovation Challenge. The challenge aims to discover innovative tools and technology solutions to enable Canadian growers to cultivate a wide variety of fruits and vegetables.

Qinglu Ying, PhD, Vineland's Research Scientist, Plant Production was one of the successful grant recipients leading Vineland's participation in the project application.

"We're thrilled about the announcement. Participation in the challenge is limited, so we're excited to be part of an exclusive group who can significantly contribute to research focused on food resiliency and sustainability," says Ying. "Vineland is well-positioned to take on this project, being a leader in applied research in Canadian horticulture. We also have a strong legacy of working closely with growers, not only in Niagara but across the country."



Qinglu Ying, PhD, Research Scientist, Plant Production

The Homegrown Innovation Challenge, funded by the Weston Family Foundation, aims at increasing the sustainability and competitiveness of the out-of-season berry industry in Canada. Led by the Ontario Horticultural Trades Foundation, Vineland in collaboration with a number of partners including the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA), Berry Growers of Ontario, Fenwick Berry Farm, First Green Energy and Roxul Inc. has been awarded this past August, the first of three phases of the challenge – the Spark Award.

The \$50,000 seed funding will support the team's project *Developing an innovated long-cane raspberry production system* in producing a high-yielding, energy efficient, fully integrated and scaled long-cane raspberry production system under protected environments. Solar panels will be used to shorten the return-on-investment period of the new system by offsetting capital infrastructure costs through income generation by net metering opportunities.

Results are expected by December this year, at which time the team will apply to the Shepherd phase. If successful, there is a potential to advance the project with further research and funding of up to \$1 million to develop proof-of-concept of the system within

a time period of up to 18 months. Innovation teams advancing through each phase of the Challenge have the potential to receive in total up to \$8 million dollars.

About the Homegrown Innovation Challenge

The Homegrown Innovation Challenge was launched in February 2022. Full details on the challenge and Spark Award can be found at:

<https://homegrownchallenge.ca/spark-award-projects/>

About Vineland Research and Innovation Centre

Vineland Research and Innovation Centre is a uniquely Canadian results-oriented organization dedicated to horticulture science and innovation. We deliver innovative products, solutions and services through an integrated and collaborative cross-country network to advance Canada's research and commercialization agenda.

We are located in Canada's Niagara Region, on the traditional territory of Anishinaabeg, Ojibway/Chippewa and Haudenosaunee peoples, this territory is covered by the Upper Canada Treaties.

We are an independent, not-for-profit organization, funded in part by the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, a five-year federal-provincial-territorial initiative. For the latest on our research and innovation, visit www.vinelandresearch.com.

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