

# AGRITECH GRANT SUPPORTS A SPICEY NEW CROP WITH ADDED HEALTH BENEFITS

The Ministry of Finance and Economic Management (MFEM) is pleased to announce it has awarded a SMART AgriTech Scheme grant to Tripitt, a newly established cayenne pepper horticulture business. Tripitt will use the grant to help establish a commercial tunnel house with smart irrigation and solar systems for growing cayenne pepper year-round.

**T**ripitt owner George Pitt is looking forward to introducing cayenne pepper to Cook Islands people, as it is a crop with very high health benefits that can help improve overall well-being.

“Research shows that, if consumed regularly, cayenne pepper helps digestion and weight loss, improves blood circulation, maintains heart health, tackles arthritis, boosts immunity, lowers cholesterol, prevents na-



sal congestion, and lowers the risk of asthma,” George says. “Cook Islands people have one of the highest rates of lifestyle diseases, so adding cayenne pepper to our diet will not only add extra spice to our food; it will also help increase positive health outcomes.”

Through his company Tripitt, George will set up a new commercial tunnel house and use it to produce a steady supply of high-quality cayenne pepper all year round. The tunnel house will have an integrated smart irrigation system that combines fertilizer with water used for irrigation, making caring for plants efficient and effective. A stand-alone solar system will keep production costs low, which in turn will help ensure cayenne pepper can be produced as an affordable food product. Growing in an enclosed environment will also maximise yield by minimising problems caused by pests and weather.

Another advantage of Tripitt’s planned growing method is that, by provid-

ing just the right environment and care, large crops can be produced from a relatively small and confined space. George expects to produce four tonnes of cayenne pepper per year, just from his first tunnel house.

George will sell the cayenne pepper through the local market and people already in the food business. As customer demand grows, Tripitt’s business can further expand in future by building additional tunnel house systems.

