



Dr Graeme Barnett, CEO of Qponics and Prof Peer Schenk from University of Queensland.
Pic Darren England.
QLD Business

Queensland start-up Qponics to farm algae to produce omega-3

John Ballot, The Courier-Mail
July 18, 2016 9:08pm
Subscriber only

QUEENSLAND start-up Qponics is set to tap into the booming Chinese supplements market as it prepares to open Australia's first sustainable omega-3 producing farm.

Qponics, which was started in 2011, received a \$1 million grant in June through the Federal Government's Cooperative Research Centres Programme to commercially produce omega-3, the key ingredient in fish oil supplements, on a southeast Queensland algae farm.

While omega-3 is already produced in Australia from animal products, Qponics CEO Graeme Barnett said the company would be the first to produce the fatty acid through sustainable means.

Algae farmed by Qponics.

"The only reason fish and other animals contain omega-3 is because they eat algae. Fish resources are rapidly depleting, so we thought it would be optimal to cut straight to the source and use algae to meet our omega-3 demands," said Dr Barnett, who has spent more than 40 years working in microbiology.



Using research and plans from the University of Queensland, which has been laying the groundwork for an algae farm project for the past 10 years, Qponics is in the final stages of negotiations to build an algae farm on a property on the Gold Coast.

They expect to have commercial production under way by the end of this year.

"We signed a memorandum of understanding with the Victorian capsule producer NutritionCare Pharmaceuticals and they will be our primary customers," Dr Barnett said.

"We will have a 10-hectare pond farm by the end of 2017, but as the Chinese and Indian markets for supplements continue to grow we can easily expand to a 100-hectare farm in five years."