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## Jujubes Tipped as Next Food Trend Amid Industry Challenges

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Australian farmers see jujubes as a potential food trend due to their nutritional benefits, but fragmented industry efforts and low consumer awareness hinder growth.

Australian farmers and industry experts are betting on jujubes (*Ziziphus jujuba* Mill.), a nutrient-rich fruit, to become the nation's next food trend, but significant barriers stand in the way. Grown in Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria, and New South Wales, jujubes are high in vitamin C and antioxidants, surpassing blueberries, according to Nola Doswell of the Western Australian Jujube Growers Association, as reported by ABC News. With 15,000 trees producing 150 tonnes annually, demand outstrips supply, particularly in Western Australia, where the industry has grown 50% in three years, per ABC News. The fruit's drought and salinity tolerance make it ideal for Australia's

challenging climate, offering potential for sustainable agriculture, according to AgriFutures Australia.

Despite this promise, the industry faces hurdles. Doswell noted that fragmentation among growers, with no unified national body, limits coordinated efforts. The South Australian Jujube Growers Association Incorporated (SAJGA), launched in 2019, and its Western Australian counterpart are working toward a national framework, but progress is slow, per Fresh Plaza. Consumer awareness remains low, with many Australians unfamiliar with jujubes' taste and health benefits. Graham Brookman, a South Australian grower, told AgriFutures Australia that while first-time tasters love the fruit, broader marketing is needed to boost demand.

Biosecurity concerns also loom large. The Australian Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) is reviewing China's application to import fresh jujubes, raising fears of pest risks. Doswell emphasized the need for rigorous safeguards to protect local orchards, per Fresh Plaza. Additionally, production challenges, such as limited rootstock varieties in Western Australia and weather-related crop losses, hamper scalability. A 2019 season saw reduced yields due to strong winds affecting pollination, Doswell told Fresh Plaza.

The Australian Jujube 2030 Strategic Blueprint aims to address these issues, targeting export markets like Hong Kong and Singapore, per AgriFutures Australia. However, critics argue the Australian Labor Party (ALP) government's regulatory burdens and high energy costs stifle small-scale farmers, limiting investment in emerging crops like jujubes, as noted in *The Australian*. With innovative processing of B-grade fruit into pantry staples, growers are optimistic but call for better support to unlock the industry's potential.