

Exotic fruit with six times the vitamin C of an orange to go on sale in Britain

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An exotic fruit with six times the vitamin C of an orange can be sold in Britain after an EU ruling.

Baobab fruit, which looks like a coconut, has twice as much calcium as milk and is very high in anti-oxidants, iron and potassium.

It will not be sold as a whole fruit as the shell is too hard to crack, instead it will be available in cereal bars and smoothies.

The fruit had not been allowed into the UK because legislation prevents the importation of food which have not been commonly consumed in the EU before 1997. All new foods have to be formally approved before they can go on sale.

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The baobab fruit won approval following heavy lobbying from PhytoTrade Africa, an organisation that promotes fair trade.

Gus Le Breton, chief executive of PhytoTrade Africa, said: "The EU decision is a crucial step to developing the global market which could be worth up to £500 million a year.

"Baobab is an ideal ingredient for smoothies and cereal bars, and its well documented nutritional benefits provide manufacturers with a new opportunity to target the booming market in healthy foods.

"Dozens of companies have shown interest in baobab since we submitted the application and many have already conducted initial research. Now that approval has been given, they can progress to full-scale product development."

In its native Africa the white powdery pulp has provided health benefits for generations.