



Ancient 'love apple' goes high tech

LONG regarded as the original 'love apple', the pomegranate has risen from relative obscurity to become one of the world's most fashionable fruits with demand exceeding supply.

The newly discovered antioxidant properties of this Mediterranean fruit are making it increasingly popular with Americans, with small quantities now coming to Australia and New Zealand.

In the US, leading grower Paramount Farming has recently expanded its trial block of pomegranates to more than 4500 acres, which has opened up an opportunity for smart fruit sorting and packing technology from Compac Sorting Equipment. Paramount needed state-of-the-art optical sorting technology to cope with the special needs of the crop, and choose Compac's InVision 9000 blemish grading system.

"It [the order] involved a huge shipment, 12 container loads in all, taking eight weeks to install," says Dave Buys, Compac's international sales director, adding that the sale was the second largest project for Compac in California.

"Optical sorting technology has never been used in pomegranates anywhere before, so we took our expertise in citrus blemish grading, which was designed to be generic, and easily adapted it to pomegranate sorting," says Buys.

Compac installed 18 lanes of pre-grader equipment to segregate the crop into processed and fresh market packing. The fresh market fruit goes through a waxing process to enhance its

appearance and is then separated out according to a range of colour and defect gradations and eight different sizes.

