



MOMENTUM: Matthew Kowal, CEO of PERKii, with the drinks that are now available in 182 stores in New Zealand.

SALES RISE AS DRINK PERKS UP THE TASTE

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UNIVERSITY of Queensland spin-off company Perkii has expanded into 182 stores in New Zealand with its probiotic drink.

Company CEO Matthew Kowal said Perkii was recording sales of up to \$100,000 a month through more than 2000 outlets in Australia and New Zealand with plans to expand further into the lucrative US market in the next 12 to 18 months and then into Asia.

"We're picking up a nice

deal of momentum," Mr Kowal said. "The aim is to grow the company so it's successful enough ... to attract larger partners that can help us accelerate it here and internationally."

Mr Kowal said a partnership with Manassen Foods Australia, one of the country's largest independent distributors, had fast-tracked the Perkii's expansion in the Australian market and was instrumental in the company's springboard into New Zealand, through the Countdown supermarket chain.

The Perkii probiotic drink uses technology, patented by UQ's commercialisation arm UniQuest, to deliver a live strain of lactobacillus into a person's gut by encapsulating it in a seaweed derivative.

Mr Kowal said the technology used tiny natural beads, called microgels, to encase and protect the bacteria from being destroyed by a person's stomach acid. He said the microgels also masked the bitter taste commonly associated with other probiotic food and drinks.

Perkii sells probiotic

drinks in three flavours – mango and passionfruit, strawberry and watermelon and lime and coconut. Two more flavours are expected to be added to the range by Christmas.

Perkii was formed in April 2016, the 100th company to be created based on intellectual property from UQ research during the past 30 years. Major shareholders include UniQuest, the Queensland Government through its Business Development Fund and Uniseed, a university and CSIRO venture fund.