

Media Release

Thursday 5 June 2025

COLES AWARDS \$3.5 MILLION TO CHAMPION AUSSIE PRODUCERS DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY

IMAGES & STILLS AVAILABLE [HERE](#)

This World Environment Day, Coles has awarded \$3.5 million in grants to 11 small and medium-sized businesses at the forefront of innovation and sustainability, as part of the latest round of the Coles Nurture Fund.

Now in its eleventh year, the Coles Nurture Fund has awarded more than \$40 million in financial support to 119 Australian producers across a wide range of industries.

The latest round of Coles Nurture Fund recipients have been awarded grants of up to \$500,000 to turn innovative ideas into real-world solutions that benefit producers, the environment and customers, including micro-bat vineyards, cyclone-proof food lockers and virtual livestock fences.

Western Australian chilli supplier Blazing Saddles has been awarded \$250,000 to introduce new cardboard punnets that will see the business remove up to 98% of its plastic waste. The grant will be used to purchase specialised packing machinery and equipment that will help make sustainable choices more accessible for Coles customers.

Blazing Saddles Director and Owner Lance Fitzgerald said the innovation was a first for the category and a major step for the family-run business.

"As a small grower, we never thought we'd be leading the charge on packaging innovation, but this grant will help us invest in the right equipment and drive positive change in the industry," he said.

"This kind of technology has been used in fruit and veg here, but never in herbs. The move to recycled cardboard punnets will significantly reduce plastic packaging and we thank Coles for supporting this step forward – for the environment, our business and for customers."

Family-owned winery and Coles Liquor supplier Fowles Wine in Victoria has been awarded \$500,000 to engineer *BatNavs* – a technology that helps micro-bats to navigate the vineyard and feed on pests, reducing the need for pesticides and promoting biodiversity.

Fowles Wine Owner and Director Matt Fowles said the Australian-first project is about rethinking how farming and nature can work together.

"We live by the idea of 'farming in nature's image' which means finding ways to work with nature, rather than against it. Working with microbats to manage pests in the vineyard is a great example of this ethos," he said.

"The potential benefits of this project are massive, not just for Fowles Wine, but also for the broader wine industry here in Australia. Based on our research, we estimate savings of \$50 million per year in pesticides and a reduced environmental impact."

"Farming can be a fairly lonely pursuit, so it is really nice to have your ideas and hard work recognised. The Coles Nurture Fund has put wind in our sails and allowed us to think big."

The Coles Nurture Fund reflects Coles' ongoing commitment to supporting local producers and communities, as the supermarket remains Australia's top corporate giver by percentage of profit for the fifth year running.

Coles Group Chief Commercial and Sustainability Officer Anna Croft said this year's recipients stood out for their forward-thinking projects that drive innovation across the industry.

"We're proud to support these businesses that are pioneering smart and practical solutions that will help to create a more sustainable future," she said.

"It's exciting to see such a strong pipeline of ideas with the potential to make a real impact, not just on production methods here in Australia, but on the communities and environments they are part of."

"At Coles, we know sustainable growth needs collaboration and the Coles Nurture Fund plays a vital role in helping producers bring these ambitious ideas to life."

Other recipients include:

- **Dates Farms Australia (Walkerie, SA)** will use a grant of \$500,000 to build a solar-powered date processing facility and expand its planting of Medjool dates, helping reduce the industry's reliance on imports and put more Australian-grown dates on Coles' shelves.
- **Cudgen Road Farms (Cudgen, NSW)** is a family-owned sustainable sweet potato farm awarded \$450,000 to build and design a new harvester that reduces crop damage, extends shelf life and reduces waste.
- **Hearman Ag (Charley Creek, WA)** is a fourth-generation orchard and cattle farm in Charley Creek that will use a \$138,000 grant to install an AI-driven solar pumping system to reduce its water usage, support more consistent apple production and reduce the orchard's carbon footprint.
- **Healthy Tech (Bowden, SA)** will use a grant of \$175,000 to help bring real-time veterinary support to remote Australian piggeries, helping farmers detect health issues earlier and improve animal welfare.
- **K&M Farming Trust (Manypeaks, WA)** will use a grant of \$245,000 to expand its' eShepherd virtual fencing program, using solar-powered GPS trackers to manage cattle more efficiently, reduce labour and improve land use.
- **Salamanca Pastoral (Hotspur, VIC)** will use a grant of \$90,000 to install native shelter belts and a new freshwater system, improving animal welfare and sustainable use of land.
- **Talwali Coffee Roasters (Hampton Park, VIC)** will use a grant of \$400,000 to help become the first Indigenous-owned business to grow coffee locally using an innovative system powered entirely by renewable energy.
- **Topsoil Organics (Forbes, NSW)** will use a grant of \$500,000 to build a compost bagging facility that turns Coles' non-edible food waste into nutrient-rich compost, helping reduce landfill, improve soil health and accelerate our transition to a circular economy.
- **Foodbank SA & NT (Edwardstown, SA)** will use a grant of \$250,000 to install cyclone-proof food lockers in remote Northern Territory communities, ensuring essential supplies are accessible during natural disasters and helping to build resilience in regional communities.

Find out more about Coles Nurture Fund Round 13 recipients [here](#).

-ends-

For media enquiries, please contact

Coles Media Line (03) 9829 5250 or media.relations@coles.com.au