

Media Release

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COLES SUPPORTS ORGANIC VEG GROWERS TO HELP MEET INCREASING CUSTOMER DEMAND *Financial support provided by Coles Nurture Fund reaches \$30 million*

Coles will help to increase the availability of organic fresh produce for customers by providing grants to innovative growers in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland.

The grants announced this week bring the total financial support provided by the Coles Nurture Fund to \$30 million since 2015.

Coles announced this week it would provide grants to six small and medium sized businesses which are implementing plans to improve sustainability, grow Australia's organic fresh produce industry and increase sustainable meat production.

Third-generation business Mt Alma Organics, located in the Burdekin Shire in North Queensland, will receive \$300,000 to purchase and install specialised equipment for washing, grading and sorting produce. Not only will this enable innovative practice, it will significantly expand their production of certified organic fruit and vegetables. An associated benefit of which will be an increased capacity to employ full-time and seasonal workers, thereby having a positive and sustained impact on the local community.

Victorian family business Peninsula Fresh Organics will use a \$300,000 grant to help implement its plans to transform its irrigation infrastructure at its farms at Baxter in VIC and Barham in NSW, saving 60 million litres of water per year and preventing run off of nutrients into local waterways, and to build a cool room to improve product shelf life.

Queensland producer Agricultural Networks will use a \$189,000 grant to help fast-track access to organic fresh produce in key growing regions through a new dedicated organic certified packing and distribution facility at Gatton which will enable them to process increased volumes of produce from many local growers.

Coles Group CEO Steven Cain said Coles was proud to support new innovative and sustainable projects through the Coles Nurture Fund.

"We're delighted to have now awarded \$30 million in financial support to more than 90 Australian producers through the Coles Nurture Fund to help drive innovation and generational sustainability on Australian farms and in production facilities," he said.

"At Coles, we want to be the most sustainable supermarket in Australia and we're actively working with our food, grocery and beverage partners to inspire customers and continue our sustainability journey by helping to expand local production, reduce emissions and increase recycling."

Coles chef and ambassador Curtis Stone, who is a panellist for the Coles Nurture Fund, said all six applicants receiving grants in the latest round of funding had clearly shown that they are worthy recipients of the Nurture Fund.

"Australia produces some of the highest quality food in the world, and it's exciting to see our Aussie farmers and producers consistently showcase innovations that contribute to a more sustainable future for our agricultural sector," he said.

"With this round's applications highlighting organic produce and sustainability, it's important that we at Coles are able to support these farmers in carrying out initiatives that will innovate and expand the Australian food sector."

Mt Alma Organics owners Gary and Angela Spotswood said "We are ecstatic to be recipients of the Coles Nurture Fund and are thrilled that our plans to improve production in our packing shed and increase our growing capacity can come to fruition much sooner."

"We look forward to working with Coles and supplying Australian families with even more of our delicious, healthy organic produce."

Agricultural Networks Operations Manager Rodney Tripp said the business was thrilled to receive a Coles Nurture Fund grant.

"Over the past 3 years, Agricultural Networks has developed a group of organic growers and a packing facility in Gympie, South Queensland, for supply of organic fruit and vegetables exclusively to Coles. This grant will be used to expand the range and volume of organic produce for supply to Coles by developing a second organic hub in Gatton, including a dedicated packhouse, and supporting the transition of more growers from conventional to organic farming practices," he said.

"As illustrated by the recent weather events impacting the major growing regions, developing a secondary hub for organics will help to mitigate against climatic risk and ensure continuity of supply of organic fresh produce for Coles' consumers."

Expanding access to sustainable meat production is also feature of this year's Nurture Fund recipients, with McMahon Family Enterprises from Lameroo in South Australia, Jalna Feedlot at Anakie in Victoria, and Elansco in Tasmania receiving grants to transform their production facilities.

Fourth-generation farmers McMahon Family Enterprises, better known as McPiggery, will use a \$490,000 grant to construct covered effluent ponds at its new sheds to help manage waste, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and implement micro turbine technology partnered with a biogas-fired hot water system to power the piggery through sustainable energy.

Lamb and horticulture business Elansco, owned and managed by Lauchlan and Sarah Cole from Cressy in Tasmania, will construct an undercover animal management facility which will greatly improve the handling, welfare and management of lambs during winter when cold and wet weather conditions can adversely affect production. The new facility will enable the business to produce consistent, quality pasture-fed lamb during the winter months.

For cattle producers David and Katy Gillett from Jalna Feedlot, a \$300,000 grant will help install two solar power systems to reduce emissions in their production of beef for Coles' carbon neutral beef range.

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