

# Media Release

colesgroup

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## **COLES AWARDS \$3.6 MILLION TO AUSSIE PRODUCERS TO DRIVE INNOVATION & SUSTAINABILITY**

***8 unique projects to receive grants of up to \$500,000 in latest round of Coles Nurture Fund***

An innovative plan to develop a carbon neutral banana range while reducing runoff into the Great Barrier Reef is one of eight projects to receive a share in more than \$3.6 million from the Coles Nurture Fund.

Coles announced today it will award grants of up to \$500,000 to eight small and medium sized businesses from across the country to implement plans to drive sustainability and innovation.

The latest grants bring the total financial support awarded through the Coles Nurture Fund to more than \$33 million across 100 businesses since the funding initiative started in 2015.

The owner of Queensland's Bartle Frere Bananas Gavin Devaney thanked Coles for the grant of \$445,000 which will be used to invest in new technologies including the ability to calculate real-time greenhouse gas emissions on the family owned and operated farm.

"This investment from Coles will help us invest in new technology that will help us develop a carbon neutral banana range and deliver significant advances in reducing nutrient runoff into the Great Barrier Reef," said Gavin.

Indigenous-owned family business Walaja Raw Bush Honey will use its grant of \$330,000 to create a new, medicinal grade, premium Melaleuca honey that is sustainably made on Yawuru Country in the West Kimberley region of Western Australia.

"This grant will make a huge difference to our company and hopefully the health and wellbeing for the many Australians who can purchase this unique Kimberley honey. We're confident this investment will help enhance Indigenous knowledge and create local employment opportunities," said founder David Appleby.

Tasmania's Esperance Bay Orchards will receive \$440,000 to invest in Near Infrared technology that detects the internal quality of organic fruit and limits food waste by reducing rejections.

"Thanks to this generous grant from the Coles Nurture Fund we will become the first organic apple pack house in the world to use self-learning AI technology to reduce food waste, improve efficiency and ensure the fruit that makes it to the shelves is of the highest quality," said Owner, Malcolm Francis who has been a supplier to Coles for more than 20 years.

Food rescue charity, and Coles partner since 2011, SecondBite, will receive a \$500,000 grant to purchase critical equipment for its five warehouses across Australia. SecondBite Acting CEO Lucy Coward said the funds will help to increase the efficiency and capacity of its food sorting and distribution processes and allow for an additional three million kilograms of rescued food to reach vulnerable Australians each year.

"We are grateful to be recipients of the 2023 Coles Nurture Fund. These funds will allow us to rescue up to an additional three million kilograms of food from landfill, providing up to six million additional meals to food insecure Australians every year. With one in five Australians currently experiencing food insecurity, funds like these are vital to SecondBite being able to keep up with the growing demand," said Lucy Coward.

Coles Group Executive General Manager Fresh Andy Mossop said the latest round of recipients were chosen for their uniqueness and ability to achieve high impact sustainability goals to reduce emissions, enhance animal welfare, and reduce waste.

"We are proud to be able to award more than \$3.6 million to eight Aussie small and medium sized businesses as part of the latest round of the Coles Nurture Fund," said Andy.

"I am excited to see how this round of funding will help bring to life bright ideas generated by these eight businesses. From carbon neutral bananas, to freezing technology that promises to reduce food waste, this year's recipients are proof Aussie farmers are leading the charge when it comes to innovation and sustainability," Andy added.

Coles Nurture Fund judging panelist Curtis Stone congratulated the eight successful recipients, adding they all displayed an impressive focus on protecting the planet and driving change.

"It is encouraging to see our local Aussie farmers and producers setting benchmarks and leading innovation across many important areas of the industry. With the environment and animal welfare at the heart of what we do at Coles, I'm encouraged to learn more about how our locals are making a difference," said Curtis.

Other producers to receive grants include:

- Edson Piggery in South Australia which will use a grant of \$475,000 to build a new freedom Farrowing system for the sow and piglets. The new pens will provide higher animal welfare standards by allowing more space for the sow to move freely within the pen during her period of nursing and lactation.
- McCormack Farms in Western Australia which was awarded a grant of \$500,000 to construct a fully covered cattle feeding facility, that will create an in-house composting system to reduce methane, nitrogen, and carbon emissions.
- Bespoke Foods in Victoria which was awarded a grant of \$450,000 to install manufacturing and freezing equipment to increase capacity, enhance efficiency, expand product range, improve product quality and reduce food waste. The project will support the continued utilisation of a broad size range of Australian sweet potato which in-turn will reduce produce wastage and optimise farming viability.
- Atlas Soils in Queensland will use a \$490,000 grant to help fund a new system for packaged food waste separation which diverts food and packaged waste from landfill as well as build a range of high-quality soil products.

National Farmers Federation CEO Tony Mahar said the producers included in this latest round of the Coles Nurture Fund showcase the exciting innovation which is helping to promote a more sustainable future for Australia's farm sector.

"With more than \$33 million having now been awarded to producers across the country since 2015, the Nurture Fund continues to play an important role in supporting the best of Australian farming and investing in cutting-edge processes and technologies," said Tony.

Australian small businesses are encouraged to apply for the 12th round of the Coles Nurture Fund via the [website](#) when applications open again in January 2024.

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