

Media Release

The Hon Jaclyn Symes MLC

Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Minister for Regional Development

Minister for Agriculture

Minister for Resources



Tuesday, 22 September 2020

AGRIBUSINESSES SUPPORTED TO ADAPT TO PANDEMIC CONDITIONS

More than 100 food businesses, farmers and suppliers across Victoria are keeping workers safe and supply chains going thanks to support from the Victorian Government, helping workplaces adapt to physical distancing and hygiene measures.

Minister for Agriculture and Regional Development Jaclyn Symes today visited Springhill Farm, a second-generation family-owned food manufacturer in Ballarat that makes delicious treats under their own brand and for clients under contract.

Springhill Farm's grant of \$132,000 has seen a new packing room and extra equipment installed to allow greater physical distancing between workers, as well as additional washbasins.

The funding through the Government's *Business Adaptation Grants* program will also support the retraining of 30 employees in COVID-safe processes and the use of new equipment.

Another grant recipient, Western Plains Pork is a breeder and supplier of free-range pigs in the Grampians region. Western Plains Pork's grant of almost \$72,000 has gone towards new equipment, including touch-free washbasins, new wash bays to clean operational equipment and an automated industrial cleaning robot.

In Victoria's east, dairy food manufacturer Village Dairy in Traralgon is receiving \$76,000 to semi-automate the business' cheese packing process to allow for greater physical distancing between employees.

The Business Adaptation Grants have been rolled out across Victoria as part of the Government's *Agriculture Workforce Plan*, which is also providing grants for worker induction and re-training, and worker relocation and transport.

The Plan is supporting businesses within key agriculture and food processing industries through job-matching, case management, targeted industry skills development and initiatives to support Victorian producers connect into new markets.

Applications for Business Adaptation Grants have now been extended and are open until the end of 2020, to support Victorian agribusinesses through the summer harvest season. To find out more or to apply for a grant, visit agriculture.vic.gov.au/agworkforceplan.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Agriculture and Regional Development Jaclyn Symes

"Local agribusinesses and food producers have shown tremendous resilience to supply quality products and keep people in work throughout the pandemic. These grants will capitalise on the strengths of our agricultural sector which in turn can lead our economic recovery and support domestic and international food security."

"Industry came to us at the start of the pandemic and identified adaptation support as an important way we can help them continue their work – we've listened to this advice and are continuing to support businesses in this way."

Quote attributable to Springhill Farm Director James Whatley

"We'd like to thank the Victorian Government for their support, which will allow our business to make the adaptations needed to ensure our workplace can keep operating safely during the pandemic and into the future."

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