

Media Release

The Hon Gayle Tierney MLC

Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council
Minister for Training and Skills
Minister for Higher Education



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DRIVING INNOVATION IN THE GOULBURN VALLEY FRUIT BOWL

Food production in the horticultural heartland of the Goulburn Valley will be boosted, with the Victorian Government supporting a new University of Melbourne innovation project.

Minister for Higher Education Gayle Tierney today launched the \$4.7 million NorVicFoods Agri-Food Innovation Cluster project which will explore innovative and digital solutions to grow and increase the efficiency of the vital food and agricultural sectors.

The project will be based at the University of Melbourne's Dookie campus, which is a gateway to local agri-food businesses, including SPC, and the companies that support them.

The project team will initially work with at least five local producers and businesses on tailored solutions, then support them to secure private investment and grants to implement solutions.

Project might include aerial technology to improve fruit harvesting practices, real-time GPS trackers to monitor milk quality and delivery and technology to better regulate the quality of red-meat products like mince and meatballs in international markets.

It will create about 87 jobs, including six full-time research positions, as well as 30 student internships at local companies.

Goulburn Valley businesses are being encouraged to sign up at fvas.unimelb.edu.au/norvicfoods.

The Government contributed \$2.7 million to the project in a joint effort by the University of Melbourne and Sensand Technology and was one of many pitches from universities to the Victorian Higher Education State Investment Fund, which was developed in response to the significant impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the sector.

The unprecedented \$350 million Victorian Higher Education State Investment Fund is supporting universities with capital works, research infrastructure projects and applied research focused on boosting Victoria's productivity and economy as the state recovers from the coronavirus pandemic.

Quote attributable to Minister for Higher Education Gayle Tierney

"This new project will deliver real-world solutions for our valuable food and agricultural businesses – while also giving fantastic opportunities to local researchers and students."

Quote attributable to Minister for Agriculture Mary-Anne Thomas

"This investment will further support the food and agriculture industry in the Goulburn Valley – which is a vital sector for employment in the region."

Quote attributable to Member for Northern Victoria Mark Gepp

"This project will directly benefit businesses in the Goulburn Valley by providing innovative solutions to problems on the ground – benefiting our local industries and economy."

Quote attributable to University of Melbourne Dean of Veterinary and Agricultural Sciences Prof. John Fazakerley

"This project allows University of Melbourne knowledge, expertise and facilities to be applied to provide real-world solutions for Goulburn Valley producers that will benefit the economy, the consumer and everyone in between."

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