

Media Release

The Hon Michaela Settle MP
Minister for Regional Development
Minister for Agriculture



Thursday, 28 May 2026

SECURING VICTORIA'S FARMING FUTURE

Labor is supporting farmers to increase production and build stronger businesses.

Minister Settle today visited Ellinbank SmartFarm in Gippsland to announce two research projects to support Victoria's agricultural sector.

Victorian scientists will explore potential RNA treatments that could protect crops and livestock from diseases.

Both ground-breaking projects are funded through Labor's \$3.5 million RNA for Agriculture Program.

\$1.77 million will support research into sustainable RNA-based biopesticides.

This research will target major agricultural pests, including grape phylloxera and the almond carpophilus beetle.

Phylloxera is a tiny insect that attacks the roots of grapevines, ultimately killing the plants.

Outbreaks can cause major yield losses, and there is currently no effective treatment for the pest.

The almond carpophilus beetle attacks the outer hull of almonds, significantly reducing crop quality.

The pest poses a serious threat to Australia's \$1.3 billion almond industry.

A further \$1.74 million will support research into an mRNA treatment for dairy mastitis.

Mastitis is the inflammation of a cow's udder, usually caused by bacterial infection.

This is one of the most significant health, welfare and economic challenges in dairy production.

The project aims to develop an mRNA therapy that boosts the cow's natural immune response, enabling earlier and more effective control of infection.

This research could help reduce mastitis-related losses by up to \$160 million annually in Victoria alone.

This program is being delivered part of Labor's *Economic Growth Statement*.

Health technologies and medical research, alongside agribusiness, are identified as priority sectors in the *Economic Growth Statement*.

Labor is investing in these projects because we back Victoria's agricultural sector to build stronger businesses.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Agriculture Michaela Settle

"We're proud to support research that will secure the future of Victoria's agriculture sector."

"Labor is backing farmers and supporting regional communities to keep growing and thriving."

Quotes attributable to Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs Steve Dimopoulos

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“We’re supporting farmers to build stronger businesses – because we back regional Victoria.”

“This is about protecting Victorian jobs and growing local economies across the state.”

Quote attributable to Member for Eastern Victoria Harriet Shing

“Ellinbank SmartFarm is leading important agricultural research that will support farmers, protect industries and strengthen regional communities.”

Quote attributable to Member for Eastern Victoria Tom McIntosh

“Backing farmers means backing local jobs and our regional economy, and that’s exactly what this investment delivers.”

Quote attributable to Agriculture Victoria Research Director Jennie Pryce

“RNA research is a transformative platform for agriculture, with the potential to reshape how we respond to pests and disease into the future. “