

## CENTRAL COAST FOOD INNOVATION INITIATIVE JANUARY 2018 UPDATE

### BACKGROUND

At its core, the Central Coast Food Innovation Region Initiative is about leveraging the NSW Central Coast's underlying existing strengths and realising economic benefit through growing and innovating the local food industry. The premium food, food security and food innovation movement is gaining momentum around the world and gradually being embraced on the Central Coast. International research has shown that innovating the food value chain is integral to enhancing regional economic development.

The overarching objective of this initiative is to grow jobs, build regional business competitiveness and encourage national and international trade. This will be achieved through a united vision, unprecedented collaboration, innovation, education and research.

The Central Coast Food Innovation Region Initiative has been endorsed by regional industry groups, the Central Coast Regional Economic Development and Employment Strategy (REDES) Executive Committee, Central Coast Council Executive Team, NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet and the NSW Department of Industry as a strategic regional initiative to drive economic growth within our region.

RDA Central Coast has successfully coordinated a number of catalyst projects to inform the development of the Central Coast Food Innovation Region Six Strategic Initiatives, which included:

- Mapping food related activity across key regional stakeholders
- Undertaking stakeholder and industry consultation
- Developing catalyst projects that would attract State and Federal Funding

From this activity, funding was sourced to deliver the following catalyst projects.

- In June 2016, Regional Development Australia Central Coast delivered a catalyst project which engaged local growers to take the first step in establishing a local value chain with local end consumers.
- A group of industry representatives has been created to develop the Central Coast Food Collective. This initiative has resulted in formal establishment of the organisation as a Not for Profit entity.
- An independent report was commissioned by RDA Central Coast from RMIT University to confirm the Food Innovation initiative's broad intentions, major projects and potential regional benefits.
- The Marketing the Central Coast as a food destination initiative has commenced with the production of a video highlighting regional food suppliers and users.
- The Central Coast Infrastructure Priority List was used to inform the 'LEK State Infrastructure Priorities' consultation coordinated by NSW Department of Industry to lead the identification of the regional priorities. The proposed Food Innovation Centre has been shortlisted as one of the priority projects for the region.

## The Six Strategic Regional Initiatives

### 1. The Development of a Food Innovation Centre To:

- Enhance food production systems
- Explore advanced food processing and packaging technologies
- Innovate local food products and extend shelf-life
- Provide consumer sensory testing services
- Commercialisation of ideas
- Ensure international export preparedness

### 2. The Launch of Business Development and Attraction Projects To:

- Develop supply chain partnerships and paddock to plate opportunities
- Stimulate growth and diversification
- Encourage start-ups and food entrepreneurs
- Build transport and logistics hubs for to encourage international exports
- Attract new business and R&D capability
- Create tourism and hospitality ventures

### 3. Enhance Research and Development Capability To:

- Coordinate R&D efforts with business, government and educational institutions
- Align capability and need
- Develop international engagement
- Encourage open dissemination of R&D
- Enhance competitiveness and grow the regional economy

### 4. Focus on Skills and Education To:

- Creation of the jobs of tomorrow
- Develop education and training courses to attract national and international students
- Ensure local delivery of identified regional skills requirements and a training curriculum that is aligned to business and food industry needs
- Reduce barriers of entry into the food industry
- Development and retention of talent
- Identifying and growing STEM capabilities and awareness

## 5. The Creation of a Food Destination To:

- Create industry growth and local jobs
- Promote local provenance, regional branding, identity and authenticity
- Develop regional food trails and events
- Encourage & support local food entrepreneurship
- Grow food tourism and hospitality in national and international markets
- Create a premium food destination that focuses on fresh local produce

## 6. Focus on Nutrition & Welfare To:

- Promote the consumption of high-quality nutritious food to reduce the incidence of obesity and other diet related health conditions
- Promote the consumption of high-quality food across the whole community as well as in aged care
- Reduce food wastage throughout the supply chain by providing imperfect food that would normally be discarded to organisations and foodbanks for distribution to members of the community experiencing financial hardship

Regional Development Australia Central Coast is continuing to provide regional leadership in the development of the Food Innovation Regional Initiative which seeks to offer a targeted initiative to strengthen the existing and emerging economic hub of the Central Coast food movement.

## CURRENT STATUS

In 2017, Regional Development Australia Central Coast & Central Coast Industry Connect to deliver a sustainable food innovation / manufacturing model as part of the Central Coast Food Innovation Region Initiative for the Central Coast region.

Central Coast Industry Connect specializes in creating collaboration and connection between for manufacturing and related industry sectors on the Central Coast. Their mission of interfacing with all levels of government, education providers and the community to create industry growth opportunities in the region adds direct value to the Central Coast Food Innovation Region Initiative.

Central Coast Industry Connect and Regional Development Australia Central Coast have held a number of high level meetings and have gain support from University of Newcastle, Monash University, RMIT University, CSIRO, FIAL, all levels of government and regional business leaders to discuss opportunities to deliver the industry, technical, educational, innovation, entrepreneurial and advanced manufacturing components of the Food Innovation Region Initiative.

In December 2017, Regional Development Australia Central Coast, The University of Newcastle and The Newcastle Institute for Energy and Resources (NIER) agreed to formally develop a partnership MOU to deliver a Central Coast Food Innovation Centre and to develop a world class food science faculty on the Central Coast.



This MOU will be signed in January 2018, which will allow the partnership to realise strong regional economic and social development through a number of strategic activities to begin in April 2018.

The partnership with the University of Newcastle and NIER will allow the Central Coast to leverage expertise from the recently implemented Global Impact Cluster for Energy, Resources, Food and Water which is aimed at accelerating innovation in the food and agriculture sectors through focused industry engagement, transdisciplinary research collaboration and commercial output.

Over the coming months, an implementation strategy will be jointly developed by Regional Development Australia Central Coast and Central Coast Industry Connect in partnership with the University of Newcastle and NIER, in consultation with all relevant regional stakeholders, including industry, the education sector and all levels of government.

Please do not hesitate to contact John Mouland (Chief Executive Officer - Regional Development Australia Central Coast) if you have any questions or comments in relation to the above information.