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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FIAL Signs Contracts with Cluster Fund Programme Winners

Today, Food Innovation Australia Limited (FIAL) finalised contracts with the four successful applicants of FIAL's Cluster Programme: East Gippsland Food Cluster, Ferment Tasmania, Central Coast Industry Connect and the Food and Agribusiness Network.

This first-of-its-kind initiative was launched in late 2017 to encourage greater connectivity and collaboration in regions and cities across the Australian Food and Agribusiness sector. An astounding 32 applications were received from across the nation, with four winners being announced at the TCI Oceania Conference on 6th June 2018 by Senator the Hon Zed Seselja.

The Cluster Programme will drive innovation and accelerate growth through matched funding to help businesses, researchers and governments at all levels tackle common challenges that they otherwise could not pursue on their own.

For Central Coast Industry Connect (CCIC), an embryonic cluster on the NSW Central Coast, the signing of this contract signals the start of an exciting journey ahead for this newly developed, industry-led food and agribusiness cluster.

"The funding will provide us with the resources to focus on developing the region's capacity in the Food and Agribusiness sector," said CCIC's Executive Officer, Frank Sammut.

In the first year, CCIC will establish its membership model and deliver an educational program for SMEs to upskill them in strategic innovation and the go-to market process. CCIC will also leverage its partnership with Regional Development Australia Central Coast, as well as the University of Newcastle, to focus on regional engagement and establishing strong relationships with research partners.

CCIC will receive \$393,000 in funding over three years as part of the FIAL Cluster Programme. The cluster will work to deliver a sustainable model that extends beyond the three-year funding package to help their food and agribusiness industry connect to export opportunities, adopt innovation, grow and ultimately increase employment opportunities for the local community.

FIAL also signed a contract with the East Gippsland Food Cluster (EGFC), which will receive \$890,000 in funding from FIAL over three years. Although Gippsland's \$7bn agrifood sector is a key driver of the regional economy, the region has been under-recognised for its capacity to produce food, according to Dr Nicola Watts, CEO of East Gippsland Food Cluster.

EGFC is currently working with Agribusiness Gippsland to form a single unified entity, so they are well-positioned to facilitate new business relationships and stronger partnerships between industry, government, researchers and the community.

"We've got an ambitious agenda around supporting more value-adding opportunities, building more brand recognition for the region and developing new capabilities. Importantly we want to strengthen the networks and the collaboration across value chains," said Andrew Bulmer.

Ferment Tasmania, another successful cluster, will receive \$840,000 in funding from FIAL over three years. Australia, and particularly Tasmania, has recently experienced an explosion of interest in drinks and foods that have been crafted through fermentation.

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“We want our region to become the global epicentre of excellence in the design, production and marketing of fermented products. FermentTasmania exists to help fermentation enterprises ‘do what they do better’, through building local capability, boosting regional employment and attracting expertise, markets and consumers from around the world,” explained Tom Lewis, Executive Director of FermentTasmania.

With FIAL’s support, FermentTasmania will help industry, universities and government share knowledge and build connections, and develop a world-class product development facility called ‘The Sandpit’.

FermentTasmania will further foster regional networks by hosting regular industry events and workshops, facilitating the design and delivery of industry-focused courses and training, as well as developing an internationally significant fermentation conference in Australia

The Food and Agribusiness Network (FAN), will receive \$900,000 in funding from FIAL over three years that will allow the cluster to expand its programmes and services with a focus on supporting members to develop their capabilities to supply national and international markets.

Since its launch in late 2015, FAN has grown quickly and today has 220 members from across the food value chain located in the Greater Sunshine Coast region. The cluster has fostered a strong culture of trust and co-operation, with members sharing connections, knowledge and resources.

The new programmes being delivered with FIAL’s support will enable FAN to respond to its members needs through creating innovative business models that are based on collaborative solutions to challenges and opportunities. These include members co-investing in a shared Export Ambassador, piloting an in-store tastings service and exploring options for group purchasing to increase business efficiencies.

According to FAN’s General Manager Emma Greenhatch, the FIAL funding will “enable FAN to move from being a start-up to a scale-up and support our members working together to accelerate their growth.”

FIAL is delighted to guide the successful applicants on their journey for regional growth.

FIAL is an industry led, government-funded initiative, responsible for delivering the Food and Agribusiness Growth Centre initiative on behalf of the Federal Government. FIAL acts as a catalyst for growth within the Australian food and agribusiness industry by sharing knowledge, building capability and creating connections.

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