



The Hon
Warren Truss MP
Federal Minister for
Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

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M E D I A R E L E A S E

▶ **\$822,380 Australian Government boost for NSW agribusiness**

Ten NSW agribusinesses are among 37 Australia-wide to receive grants and scholarships totalling \$2.5 million under the Australian Government's New Industries Development Program (NIDP), Agriculture Minister Warren Truss announced today.

Mr Truss said the NIDP, which is administered by the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, is a key element of the Government's *Backing Australia's Ability* initiative.

"Today's awards are funded under the NIDP's In-Market Experience Scholarship and Pilot Commercialisation Project (PCP) schemes, and will help build the management skills of some of the leading innovators in Australian agribusiness," Mr Truss said.

"Some of the successful projects in NSW include Dora Creek-based company Aquabait, which is receiving a PCP grant of \$110,000 to commercialise production of marine worms for the fishing bait and aquaculture feed industries. Ensil, a company based in Girraween is using its \$110,000 PCP grant to improve its plant and equipment, and commercially produce a new rapid-acting, high-availability silicon fertiliser called 'Silvine'®."

"Mountain Top Coffee, based in Nimbin, has received a \$29,445 In-Market Experience Scholarship to help commercialise a high-quality, specialty coffee, and Hunter Natural Cooperative, based in Scone, has received a \$33,000 scholarship to commercialise nutritious beef 'meals-in-a-bag' with a shelf-life of 12 months.

"85 pilot commercialisation projects and 41 scholarships have been funded under the expanded NIDP - demonstrating a clear commitment by the Coalition Government to help Australian agribusiness capture new market opportunities."

Mr Truss congratulated all the recipients, saying the wide range of initiatives being funded under the NIDP highlights the increasing diversification and innovation taking place in Australian agribusiness.

The next round of PCP funding closes on 23 January 2004. For further information, including guidelines and application forms, visit www.affa.gov.au/agribiz or call **1300 884 588** (for the cost of the local call).

Details on the 10 NSW agribusinesses receiving scholarships and PCP funding today are attached. For a full list of recipients Australia-wide, or additional information on the NIDP, please call the Program's Manager, **Naomi Ashurst** on **(02) 6272 3785**.

NSW recipients of In-Market Experience Scholarships and PCP grants

In-Market Experience Scholarships (all amounts include GST)

Recipient: FR Heywood Partnership. **Location:** Manilla. **Amount:** \$21,560.
FR Heywood's Gavin Heywood has been awarded a \$21,560 scholarship to help him investigate the local market for high-quality, goat blood serums for use in medical research. He will also look at the supply situation for the raw material. The new business, trading under the name of 'Specific Serum', will help the family-run company diversify operations away from its traditional focus on wool and beef. The scholarship will also be used to improve Gavin's business skills and investigate other blood product opportunities.

Contact: Gavin Heywood gavinsteph@bigpond.com or (02) 6783 0101.

Recipient: Hunter Natural Cooperative. **Location:** Scone. **Amount:** \$33,000.
Hunter Natural Coop's CEO Rebecca Arnott has been awarded a \$33,000 scholarship to help her commercialise nutritious beef 'meals-in-a-bag', which have a shelf life of 12 months without the need for refrigeration. She will undertake a web site development course, and also attend domestic and international food fairs to promote the product. Hunter Natural is one of five alliance groups that supply the 'Natures Beef' brand.

Contact: Rebecca Arnott hunter.natural@bigpond.com or (02) 6545 9180.

Recipient: Mountain Top Coffee. **Location:** Nimbin. **Amount:** \$29,445.
Mountain Top Coffee's Production Manager Gerard Dwyer has been awarded a \$29,445 scholarship to help him commercialise a new, high-quality, specialty coffee. He will participate in a range of activities with established Australian and international coffee traders, including boosting his networking and market research skills, as well as making closer contacts with roasters and *baristas*. The ultimate aim is to gain a much better understanding of quality requirements within the highly competitive coffee market.

Contact: Gerard Dwyer Gerard@mountaintopcoffee.com.au or (02) 6689 0229.

Pilot Commercialisation Project grants (all amounts include GST)

Recipient: Aquabait. **Location:** Dora Creek. **PCP grant:** \$110,000.
Dora Creek-based Aquabait will use its \$110,000 PCP grant to fully commercialise production of marine worms for the fishing bait and aquaculture feed industries. The project involves significantly increasing the company's pond areas, and expanding its markets by distributing the worms either alive or frozen. Aquabait's product is a sustainable and environmentally friendly alternative to wild-caught worms.

Contact: Milada Safarik Milada@aquabait.com.au or (02) 4973 5505.

Recipient: Riverina Olive Grove. **Location:** Wagga Wagga. **PCP grant:** \$110,000.
Riverina Olive Grove will use its \$110,000 PCP grant to launch a complete range of extra virgin olive oil skin care products on the domestic and international markets. The grant will be used to produce, sell and market the products, as well as specialist activities such as developing web pages and expanding distribution networks. Riverina Olive Grove's decision to commercialise its high-value, skin care products not only represents an excellent business opportunity for the company, but also means its client-growers get a better price for their oil.

Contact: Gerard Gaskin gerardgaskin@bigpond.com or (02) 6922 9221.

Recipient: Ensil (a joint venture between Peter English, of Armidale, and Ruralco Holdings, of Girraween). **Location:** Girraween. **PCP grant:** \$110,000.
Ensil will use its \$110,000 PCP grant to expand plant and equipment at its Ipswich

premises, and undertake a commercial-scale production run of a new, rapid-acting, Australian-patented, silicon fertiliser called 'Silvine'®. The grant will also be used to hold commercial-scale field trials, and a range of promotional and marketing activities. Silvine® promises to increase yields and returns in the broadacre cereal cropping and sugarcane industries by supplying monosilicic acid to silicon-deficient light soils throughout Australia. It will be mixed with conventional fertilisers to ensure a more efficient use of phosphorus.

Contact: Peter English pewe@ceinternet.com.au or **(02) 6772 7367**.

Recipient: Serendip Organics. **Location:** Alstonville. **PCP grant:** \$110,000.

Serendip Organics has designed a range of skincare products using certified organic macadamia nuts and avocados produced on its farm. Serendip will use its \$110,000 PCP grant to carry out trial production runs and take the skincare range to the marketplace, along with a number of promotional activities. Serendip's products will be the first certified, organic, skincare range in the world to include macadamia oil.

Contact: Christine Rijks serendip@vtown.com.au or **(02) 6628 3858**.

Recipient: Veterinary Health Research. **Location:** West Armidale. **PCP grant:** \$80,300.

Armidale-based company, Veterinary Health Research, has been awarded an \$80,300 PCP grant to help commercialise its Drench Resistance Kit - the first product of its type. The kit enables sheepmeat and wool producers to determine quickly, accurately and economically the presence of internal parasites resistant to traditional anthelmintics.

Contact: Michelle Wooster mwooster@vhr.com.au or **(02) 6771 1358**.

Recipient: Ag Biotech Australia. **Location:** Richmond. **PCP grant:** \$110,000.

Ag Biotech Australia will use its \$110,000 PCP grant to help commercialise an Australian-made bio-control called 'VIVUS' to tackle *Helicoverpa* spp (the heliothis moth), a serious pest in the cotton industry. The funding will be used to develop innovative technologies to produce commercial quantities of VIVUS for sale in Australia. The project also involves producing a concentrated form of the product.

Contact: Patrick Buerger pbuerger@bigpond.com or **(02) 4588 5709**.

Recipient: Colin Dickson (trading as 'Ishwinroo Enterprises'). **Location:** Pomona. **PCP grant:** \$108,075.

Ishwinroo Enterprises will use its \$108,075 PCP grant to grow golden perch commercially. The project involves Ishwinroo setting up a hatchery, 'grow-out' and harvesting dams, and also export-quality processing and ice-making facilities. A commercial-scale golden perch farm will allow Ishwinroo to service a demand for the fish in Asian markets - a demand that used to be met by commercial fisherman until it was stopped.

Contact: Jenny Dickson Ishwinroo@hotmail.com or **(03) 5027 3737**.

Further media inquiries:

Minister Truss' office:

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