

## **INCREASED EXPORT OPPORTUNITIES FOR NSW FRUIT AND VEGIES THANKS TO NEW \$5.9M FARMING RESEARCH CENTRE**

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NSW fruits and vegies will be sold to new international markets with the help of a new \$5.9 million state-of-the-art farming research centre on the Central Coast, funded by the NSW Government.

The new joint Industry & Investment NSW research facility located at the University of Newcastle's Central Coast campus, will help farmers across NSW produce clean, green crops that reduce the use of pesticides. It will also help local producers export their goods to new markets in Asia and beyond.

"Due to research from this state-of-the art facility, NSW cherries will be going to Taiwan, peaches to the United States and nectarines to Japan," Ms Kristina Keneally said.

"This will help farmers establish long-term and lucrative markets in Asia and other overseas markets."

The Central Coast region produces around \$200 million in agricultural produce including chickens, eggs, citrus and avocados, asian vegetables and fruit - the majority of this produce is for domestic markets here in Australia.

Ms Keneally said the new facility will help gain market access for NSW produce, building on the successes on the Government's existing program, the Primary Industries Institute in Gosford, which resulted in the reopening of Australian trade with Taiwan for stone fruit and cherries estimated to be worth \$30 million.

Premier Keneally, Primary Industries Minister Steve Whan, and Member for The Entrance Grant McBride, made the announcement while visiting Australia's largest hydroponic vegetable grower, Nathan Clackson of Bardon Produce.

The new centre - scheduled for completion by December this year - will help farmers such as Mr Clackson with latest scientific advice, which he can use in his own farming techniques, as well as potentially secure new markets abroad.

"This new facility, once complete, will be a leading Australian horticulture research facility," Ms Keneally said.

"World-class researchers will be based at this facility and will help to make new horticultural technology and best-practice more accessible to NSW farmers."

"They'll also help farmers increase their productivity, use less water in the production of crops, and produce bigger and better vegetables using the latest technology and techniques."

Mr McBride said construction on the new complex was also a timely injection for the local building industry.

"The project will create more than 25 local jobs during construction which is great news for the region," Mr McBride said.

“Newcastle University’s Central Coast campus is renowned for its world-leading food research program and this new facility will help consolidate the University as a leading national centre in this field.”

Minister Whan said the 1800 square metre complex is Stage One in a two stage building project.

“Preliminary design has started on the second stage which consists of a greenhouse facility, fisheries and other storage and car parking,” Mr Whan said.

“We are also working with the University of Newcastle to establish the NSW Institute for Frontier Geoscience at the University’s main campus, which will provide highly trained graduates for the minerals and energy industries.

“This is an exciting joint venture that will provide new opportunities to develop local food and other industries in conjunction with University of Newcastle.”

University of Newcastle Vice-Chancellor, Professor Nick Saunders, said the collaboration between I&I NSW and the Central Coast campus was a wonderful initiative that would boost research in the plant and food sciences field.