

MEDIA RELEASE

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Growing business knowledge reaps benefits

ENTREPRENEURS in the Wimmera Southern Mallee have advanced their business knowledge through a locally-run initiative, which concludes this week.

Participants of the Wimmera Development Association and Food Innovation Australia-lead “Seeds of Growth” program will now take the new skills and connections they have gained across its 12-week duration into the marketplace.

The online program, which started in February, aimed to support existing or budding food producers to commercialise new revenue streams and adopt new technology.

Wimmera Development Association project manager Vernetta Taylor said the host organisations hoped this program would be the beginning of an annual opportunity for food producers across the region.

“WDA recognised the potential to develop and enhance our existing food production industry by supporting our local entrepreneurs to build capacity, create connections and to develop sustainable operations,” Mrs Taylor said.

“Participants of the program were identified through an initial workshop in October 2020. It was open to any individual or business wanting to explore how they might be able upscale their existing business or to get their business idea off the ground.

“Participants have covered a range of topics including how to identify the opportunities in a changing market, exploring strategic options to drive business growth, how to leverage business partnerships and how to pitch your business in 60 seconds.”

Innovation agency Beanstalk Ag delivered the program. Participation fees were subsidised through Food Innovation Australia, Wimmera Development Association and Wimmera Southern Mallee councils.

Mrs Taylor said processing food locally was a great opportunity for the Wimmera Southern Mallee.

“Our region has a long and proud history in agriculture and while we grow a lot of produce, we allow other regions to process the product and gain most of the value,” she said.

“Building and supporting emerging food business in the region is an important part of ensuring we can allow our region grow, have great job opportunities for our families and harness our entrepreneurial spirit.

“We also want to highlight the opportunities that exist and to encourage more food processing in the region, which may entice people to the area, which in turn drives strong economic growth for the region.”

Shawna Dominelli of Grampians Ale Works, Anita Evans of Five Ducks Farm and Richard Inglis of RichMarket Garden will go on to participate in the next phase of the program - “Actioning Innovation” including three months of high-level and bespoke support.

All participants will mark the end of the program with a regional tour, presentation and dinner in Horsham on Wednesday.

Wimmera Development Association is the peak advocacy body behind many major, emerging projects in the region. It supports businesses, promotes economic development opportunities to investors and is a key link between industry and governments, lobbying for improved infrastructure and for regional priority issues.

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