

UQ announces Agri-Food Alliance to work with local agri-food businesses

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The soon-to-be-established group is part of a two year pilot program, connecting UQ's research and education in agri-food science with Queensland's agrifood business thanks to \$2.5 million in funding from the Australian Government's Strategic University Reform Fund.

Deputy Associate Dean for Research Partnerships for UQ's Faculty of Science, Professor Melissa Fitzgerald, said the pilot would lower barriers for industry collaboration, build strong links between academics, students and local industry and improve commercialization of research.

"The UQ Agri-Food Innovation Alliance will work hand-in-hand with local agri-food businesses, transforming ideas into sustainable production methods, delicious new commercially viable foods and cybersecure supply chains," Professor Fitzgerald said.

"Expect new Aussie foods to be lighting up tastebuds in both domestic and international markets.

"The project will bring together cutting-edge science, education and entrepreneurship – it'll be South-East Queensland's Wonka factory for new-and-emerging Aussie food and beverages.

"UQ has a strong history of fostering food inventions – from probiotic-rich juices, to 3D-printed chocolate, to native Australian sweets – so we're thrilled to be investing in the development of a whole host of new collaborative creations along with job-ready graduates."

The project will see UQ working with food producers of all sizes and building relationships within the sector.

“We’re particularly excited to be working with small businesses, and we have kick-starter grants ready to go,” Professor Fitzgerald said.

“These range from new animal feed supplements to new food product development from camel milk, new processing methods for gelatine, sustainable packaging and developing a digital twin for Australian agri-food supply chains.

“These businesses will also have access to research translation facilities planned at AgriFood Connect AATLIS precinct, Toowoomba, where UQ researchers and students will work with industry-based infrastructure and pilot equipment.

“UQ is well positioned to value-add to these businesses, giving Aussie businesses the expertise and support they need to reach new or more distant markets.

“And we aim to attract multinational companies to the region, so it’s really an investment that will continue to underpin the local economy and its development.”

Further announcements will be made closer to the facility’s completion.