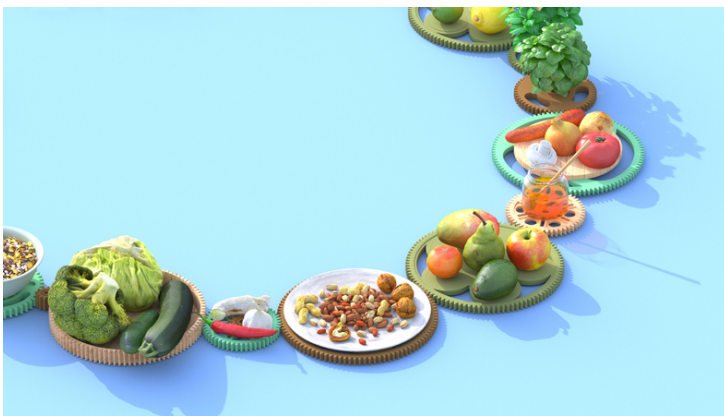


QUT Research Highlights Major Growth Opportunity in Australia's Upcycled Food Sector

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QUT researchers have found Australia is well-positioned to build a competitive upcycled food sector, turning surplus and byproducts into high-value food products while reducing food waste and supporting growers and manufacturers.

The research, delivered through the two-and-a-half-year Accelerating Food Transformation project led by QUT in collaboration with End Food Waste Australia (EFWA) and the Queensland Government, highlights a major economic, environmental and innovation opportunity as the global upcycled food market is projected to reach \$68.56 billion by 2032 (Fortune Business Insights, 2025).

The project found that upcycled food offers a scalable solution to help address the estimated 2.96 million tonnes of food wasted each year across Australia's primary production and manufacturing sectors (FIAL, 2021), while creating new value streams for industry.

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The research team comprised Associate Professor Hope Johnson from the QUT School of Law, Associate Professor Bree Hurst and Associate Professor Lisa Schuster, both from the QUT School of Advertising, Marketing & PR.

The research team, with growers, entrepreneurs, government representatives and consumers, is examining the regulatory, manufacturing and consumer factors shaping the emergence of upcycled food in Australia. The study found no major regulatory barriers, but identified the need for clearer upcycling definitions, shared manufacturing infrastructure and targeted consumer education.

Associate Professor Johnson said realising the potential of upcycled food requires coordinated action across regulation, research, industry capability and consumer engagement.

“This project has highlighted the importance of understanding and navigating existing regulatory frameworks, including food safety and labelling, while demonstrating that regulation itself is not a primary barrier when approached with clarity and confidence,” Associate Professor Johnson said.

“Critically, the research builds the evidence base needed to understand consumer acceptance and demand, which is essential to developing a viable new market and supporting credible claims to enable greater investment and scale.”

EFWA Director of Research, Development and Extension, Francesca GoodmanSmith, said the project provides practical insight to help businesses, policymakers, and researchers move forward with confidence.

“By bringing together regulatory analysis, industry experience and consumer evidence, the study offers a shared foundation to support coordinated action, reduce risk and accelerate learning through case studies and guidance for manufacturers of upcycled foods,” GoodmanSmith said.

“The findings are relevant not only nationally, but also internationally, contributing to the growing body of knowledge on how upcycled food sectors can be responsibly developed, scaled and embedded as a core strategy for reducing food waste, increasing profitability and strengthening food system resilience.”