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## Coles funds more sustainability projects

Supermarket giant to provide A\$3m in grants to 12 small and medium sized businesses



Coles chief executive, Steven Cain

Australian retailer Coles has announced it will provide grants to 12 small and medium sized businesses which are instigating plans to improve sustainability, rebuild after bushfires and produce more Australian food and beverages.

Half of the 12 grants are associated with the production of fresh produce or nuts, including:

- Black River Produce will plant more asparagus and install equipment to process the produce on their farm west of Townsville in Queensland. This will enable them to produce asparagus out of season and replace imported asparagus with Aussie-grown produce.
- The Olsen family from Hallora in Victoria's Gippsland – who won The Weekly Times Coles Innovative Farmer of the Year in February – will expand its facilities to treble the manufacture of its Soilkee

Renovator, invented by Niels Olsen, is a revolutionary pasture cropping system that plants seeds in a unique way which improves soil structure and builds soil carbon through carbon sequestration.

- Harvey Citrus from Harvey in Western Australia will extend the supply of WA-grown citrus over the summer by at least three weeks and increase local employment by extending its cool room facility and acquiring solar panels for its packing shed.
- Sutton Farms from Gatton in Queensland will increase water and fertiliser efficiency by introducing grow bag technology and a new irrigation system for its cherry tomatoes grown in the field.
- Hall Stanley Premium Chestnuts from Stanley in Victoria will save water and increase production by introducing new high-efficiency

irrigation and fertigation, which reduces evaporation and increases nutrients.

- Darren and Mark Todaro from Todaro Farms at Cora Lynn, Victoria will increase yields and quality by installing frost protection fleece and relocatable hail netting over their vegetables.

Coles Group chief executive, Steven Cain (pictured), said the commitment of nearly A\$3m in grants brings the total amount provided by the Coles Nurture Fund to more than A\$24m since it was established.

"The Coles Nurture Fund was set up to support new, innovative practices, processes and technologies and we've been delighted with the calibre of the applications this year. At a time when food and grocery manufacturing across Australia is so important due to the flow-on effect of Covid-19, it's terrific to see the innovative, forward thinking of small to medium sized businesses," said Cain.

“At Coles, we also want to win together with Australian producers to be the most sustainable supermarket in Australia. By helping to fund initiatives which increase recycling, reduce water use, increase local production and enhance the environment, we aim to drive generational sustainability in Australia.”

National Farmers Federation chief executive Tony Mahar welcomed Coles’ support for innovative farmers.

“It’s inspiring to see that from the challenges of drought and bushfires has come such ingenuity,” he said.

“The focus on sustainability and increased efficiencies amongst this Round’s Nurture Fund recipients is in direct alignment with the NFF’s vision to grow Australia’s overall farm gate output to A\$100bn by 2030, up from A\$60bn today.”