



By Matthew Jones

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Woolworths backs organic growers

Retail giant awards Organic Growth Fund grants to four family-owned Australian farms



The Cantrill Family from Cantrill Organics

Woolworths has awarded more than A\$1m in new grants to organic growers across Australia as part of its Organic Growth Fund.

The four successful recipients – Cantrill Organics, Kalafatis Fresh Produce, Wattle Organic Farms and Prime Organics – grow a wide range of fruit and vegetable varieties on farms in Western Australia, New South Wales and Victoria.

The A\$30m Woolworths Organic Growth Fund was established in 2018 in partnership with Heritage Bank to help Australian farmers meet the growing consumer demand for organic fruit and vegetables. The latest round of funding is the third under the programme.

"The customer demand for organic fruit and veg continues to grow at around 20 per cent a year," said Woolworths general manager of fruit and vegetables, Paul Turner.

"We're working in close partnership with

local farmers to ensure we can meet the growing demand with Aussie grown products.

"In this round, we're backing four more hard-working and entrepreneurial Australian farming families, with another A\$1m in investment through the Organic Growth Fund."

Goulburn Valley-based Kalafatis Fresh will use its \$500,000 grant to branch out into organics. It intends to purchase orchard infrastructure to farm organic pears and plums. This includes a vertical espalier trellis to cover its crops with pest-proof netting.

"Consumers are putting more organic produce into their shopping baskets every week – that's what we're seeing and what the statistics are telling us," said Jimmy Kalafatis of Kalafatis Fresh.

"Australians are becoming more educated about how their food is produced and are looking more to methods of growing produce that don't require chemicals or pesticides."



Jimmy, Sarah and Emily Kalafatis from Kalafatis Fresh

Operating Australia's largest organic cherry orchard, Cantrill Organics is a family owned farm in Nashdale, New South Wales. The company has secured a \$170,000 grant to continue to purchase new cherry varieties that will bring its harvest season forward. It will also provide funding for infrastructure upgrades to solar panels, its packhouse and upgrades to its dam.

Wattle Organic Farms is run by Nathan Free, alongside his parents Kelvin and Deanne, at Lake Boga near

Swan Hill in Victoria. A A\$80,000 grant will allow the Free family to expand and improve its most in-demand stonefruit lines.

Round four of the Woolworths Organic Growth Fund is now open, with Woolworths inviting farmers to apply by 11 October 2020.

Woolworths has committed to investing up to A\$30m over a five-year period in the form of financial grants and interest-free loans. Applicants who

successfully apply to the Woolworths Organic Growth Fund for an interest-free loan will be issued the loan by Heritage Bank.

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