



MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

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**ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff,
News Directors**

Research partnership promotes added-value food production for regional Tasmania

The University of Tasmania launched its new Centre for Food Innovation (CFI) today (**Thursday, April 4**) and at the same time announced a ground-breaking science collaboration with the Commonwealth Government's Defence Science and Technology Organisation (DSTO) and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO).

The UTAS Vice-Chancellor Professor Peter Rathjen, CSIRO Chief of Animal, Food and Health Sciences Professor Martin Cole and DSTO's Chief Defence Scientist Dr Alex Zelinsky signed a collaborative agreement that will link Tasmania to national food research networks and initiate joint research projects.

It's a partnership that aims to help diversify Tasmania's economic base by growing exports of high-quality, nutritious and value-added food products.

The CFI, headed by its newly appointed foundation director, Prof Roger Stanley, will bring together the expertise of nutritionists and food technologists from all three partners to undertake research of direct relevance to Tasmania and Defence needs.

Research projects driven by industry needs will include:

- Increasing export market access for fresh produce by extending shelf life using innovative processing and packaging technologies.
- Developing key technologies to make and test specialised foods that could find dual use in Defence and civilian markets such as sports performance nutrition, aged care feeding and shelf-stable foods for emergency response.
- Characterising and communicating the benefits of regional foods and local heritage cultivars to promote appreciation of our unique environment and products to differentiate and brand Tasmanian foods.

Prof Rathjen said that he was pleased to see an important agriculture-based centre established in Launceston and he looked forward to it contributing to a brighter future for the State's primary producers.

"The wider benefits for Tasmania are expected to include increased employment in the local food and agricultural sector, including food and nutrition research, education and training, product development, and processing and production," he said.

"The CFI is already consulting industry to establish regional networks and facilities associated with industry where local producers can work collaboratively and with researchers to test their ideas.

"Our partnership with DSTO and CSIRO is an important one and the resulting research will no doubt help us contribute in new ways to the nation's food bowl."

Prof Stanley said that science needs to prove what some Tasmanian primary producers already use as a selling tool – a clean, green environment producing nutritious natural foods that can have associated health benefits.

"We need to better communicate the benefits of our food and introduce new ways for industry to enable consumers to trace where a food item was grown and under what conditions," he said.

"The CFI will work with many established UTAS institutions and initiatives, such as the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture, Australian Maritime College logistics, the School of Human Life Sciences and the Sensing Tasmania (Sense-T) network. It will also be working closely with the Food Precinct as part of a national food network."

In a positive move for the North-East the CFI will enable the DSTO facility in Scottsdale to grow its research capabilities in food science and technology, provide access to a broader pool of experts and foster an enhanced science environment to extend the research base for new and innovative food for Defence.

"DSTO plays a key role in supporting innovation in Defence, and the Centre for Food Innovation provides us with the perfect mechanism to conceive and transition our innovative ideas into products that will feed our troops," DSTO's Chief Defence Scientist Dr Alex Zelinsky said.

CSIRO Chief of Animal, Food and Health Sciences Prof Martin Cole said it was a pleasure for CSIRO to participate in the collaboration with DSTO and the University of Tasmania in the dual use of science and technology to add value to Tasmanian produce and to provide more nutritious, appealing and safer food to Australian soldiers.

"As we face up to the food security challenges that lie ahead, locally and globally, innovative processing will be crucial to delivering safe and nutritious food to an increasingly urbanised population," he said.

"This centre also provides a great opportunity for Tasmania to take part in national food initiatives to develop higher value foods from Australian produce for export."

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