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INSTITUTE OF  
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*TIA is a joint venture of the University of Tasmania and the Tasmanian Government.*

## **NEWS FROM THE TASMANIAN INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURE**

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# Media Release

## Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

Tuesday, 30 August, 2016

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### Increasing pea profits and production

The Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture (TIA) is joining forces with local vegetable-processing company Simplot as part of a new project to improve the productivity and profitability of processing peas in Tasmania.

TIA and Simplot are partnering in a new \$300,000 project that has been funded for three years by Horticulture Innovation Australia with funds from the vegetable industry levy and the Australian Government.

Led by TIA Senior Lecturer in Horticultural Science Dr Alistair Gracie, the project team will work closely with farmers and key stakeholders in the vegetable industry to increase the yield per hectare production of peas in Tasmania.

Each year Tasmanian vegetable growers produce approximately 24,000 tonnes of green peas from about 4000 hectares for processing, which have a farm gate value of \$10 million.

The volume of green peas produced in Tasmania accounts for around 95 per cent of the total production of green peas for processing in Australia, with the majority packaged as frozen produce and retailed in domestic markets.

The project aims to help the industry increase the State's average yield from six tonnes per hectare to its target of eight tonnes per hectare by 2020.

Dr Gracie says the project will identify practical methods that producers can apply to maximise their productivity.

"As part of the research we will be evaluating density and plant spatial arrangements to optimise yield for early, mid and late-season cultivars," Dr Gracie said.

"We estimate that these improvements could lead to an increase in average returns per hectare of 20 per cent to growers within two years of the completion of this project."

The project will run demonstration sites and research trials and will also build strong farmer relationships through focus groups led by Simplot staff.

"The research is going to be farmer focused and we have embedded a collaborative approach from the beginning of the project to ensure the research outcomes are applicable and highly relevant," Dr Gracie said.

The research results will be used to inform the development of best practice guidelines for precision planting of peas, which will be distributed through Simplot to its pea grower base and made available online.

These guidelines will also be used to inform Simplot's contracts with suppliers and will include practical information on density and equipment.

Mr Peter Hardman, Business Development Manager at Simplot, says the company is continually faced with the challenge of increasing production efficiencies in order to maintain a viable processing pea industry.

"The importance of green peas to Tasmania's vegetable industry exceeds its direct value," Mr Hardman said.

"Although they are a relatively low-return crop they represent about 40 to 45 per cent of Simplot Australia's vegetable processing factory throughput.

"This volume aids in covering factory overheads and capital utilisation, and therefore underpins the entire frozen vegetable industry in Australia.

"We are looking forward to working with TIA on this project to help increase the sustainability of vegetable production in the State."

TIA is a joint venture between the Tasmanian Government and the University of Tasmania.

**Information released by:**

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