



MEDIA RELEASE

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EXCELLENCE IN AGRIBUSINESS AWARD WINNERS ANNOUNCED AT GALA DINNER

Close to 200 people from all over Gippsland and beyond joined together for a celebration on Friday night in Sale to reward and recognise those who are shaping the future of Gippsland's food and fibre sector.

The inaugural Food & Fibre Gippsland Excellence in Agribusiness Awards Gala Dinner was held at the recently renovated historic Cobb & Co building, now known as The Stables and guests were treated to a feast of Gippsland's finest produce.

Flavorite was crowned the Gippsland Agribusiness of the Year and was described by the judging panel as an outstanding Gippsland success story, with the Nichols and Millis families revolutionising the tomato business in Australia.

Their investment in glasshouse technology has taken them from a cottage industry to a major supermarket supplier and one of the top four players in the country in their category. Currently employing 350 staff and growing, Flavorite has strategic future plans for expansion into other products.

As well the prestigious title, Flavorite was also awarded a scholarship valued at \$15,000 to attend KPMG'S Agri-Food Tech Traction Tour – a 7-day international immersion in leading agri-food locations around the world.

Ben van Delden, Partner, Operations Advisory and Head of AgriFood Tech at KPMG was at the Gala Dinner and congratulated them on their accolade.

"Flavorite is a very deserving winner and we're really looking forward to them being part of our KPMG Agri-Tech Traction Tour – the insights and the access to seeing new technologies being used in other countries will be a brilliant learning experience"

"The dual benefit of our Agri-Tech Traction Tour is that through the power of collaboration, our tour attendees are able to bring back their learnings and share with industry in Gippsland – meaning that not only does their own business potentially thrive as a result of things learned overseas, but the region as a whole, gets a lift – and together, can all reach greater levels of prosperity through innovation " Ben concluded.

Daniel Johnson from Johnson Poultry was named Young Agribusiness Leader of the Year, recognising his efforts in establishing the first broiler farm in the Wellington and Latrobe region, that is now potentially one of the leading poultry farms in Australia – and the only one owned by someone under 45.

Daniel is 32 years old and in the eight years prior to launching Johnson Poultry, he worked and travelled the globe to gain insights, adopt and adapt technology to create what is now a world leading operation that holds a significant contract with Inghams.

By winning this award, Daniel will have the opportunity to complete a Training Rural Australians in Leadership (TRAIL) Course, run by the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation.

"Congratulations to the Gippsland Young Agribusiness Leader of the Year (ARLF), Daniel Johnson, for receiving a scholarship place on The Foundation's TRAIL program.



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“The Foundation is committed to supporting emerging leaders develop collaborative, ethical and courageous leadership skills and expand their industry networks,” said Matt Linnegar, Chief Executive of the ARLF.

The winners in each of the excellence categories reads like a who’s who of Gippsland agribusiness, with each of the winners demonstrating, innovation and excellence, coupled with business practices that maximise profit and profitability.

- Excellence in Service to the Food & Fibre Industry: Full Circle Nutrition
- Excellence in Workforce Capability: Mulgowie Farming Co.
- Excellence in Exporting: ViPlus Dairy
- Excellence in Research and Development: Macalister Demonstration Farm
- Excellence in Food Manufacturing: Patties Foods
- Excellence in Innovation: Hussey & Co
- Excellence in Sustainability: Blackwood Piggery
- Excellence in Adaption to Change: Soilkee

All winners received a double pass to access all areas at the internationally renowned Global Table food industry event in Melbourne next month.

Food & Fibre Gippsland Chairperson Joanne Butterworth-Gray joined with CEO Paul Griffin in congratulating both the finalists and the winners.

“The quality of the entries was fantastic in the first year, the finalists were all very impressive, and so passionate about their Gippsland food & fibre business.

“We congratulate the winners and commend you on your commitment to innovation and collaboration across the region” they said.

In its first year, the Awards attracted great support from the business community in Gippsland and beyond and has delivered on its objective to increase awareness of agribusiness in Gippsland.

In collaboration with Food & Fibre Gippsland, the actual creation of the awards program was made possible when Wellington Shire Council with support from Latrobe City and Baw Baw Shire, presented a very compelling case to the Latrobe Valley Authority at the beginning of the year about the need to raise the profile of Gippsland agribusinesses to the broader region.

Through the support of LVA, the three municipalities were able to secure funding to employ an Agribusiness Promotions and Strategy Coordinator, Kate Gunn, who has worked out of Wellington Shire, doing a brilliant job to bring the awards program together.

The program has created increased awareness for the food & fibre sector and helped communities become more aware of the diversity and quality of produce that is grown in their own region – with the inaugural Gala Dinner being such an outstanding success being a culmination of all those efforts.

The Excellence in Agribusiness Awards Program is set to continue and attract even more entries in 2020, evolving to be a “must enter” for Gippsland’s food and fibre businesses to get themselves in front of the judging panel, and a “must do” event on everyone’s social and networking calendar to attend the Gala evening.

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Photo credits: Jess Shapiro – More information, please call Jody O’Brien 0416 222 899