



**Food & Fibre
Gippsland**

MEDIA RELEASE

INNOVATIVE PROCESS TO FIGHT FOOD WASTE AND REDUCE LANDFILL IN GIPPSLAND

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Food waste is a 20 billion dollar a year problem in Australia.

One of Food & Fibre Gippsland members, a fresh produce retailer and wholesaler based in the Latrobe Valley, has introduced an innovative solution to the region with a dehydrator system that converts food waste to a nutrient rich fertilizer.

Manny's Market at Morwell has an Enrich360 dehydrator system in the basement of their store, with a cool room close by that can store large numbers of the special recycled plastic boxes that the food waste is securely stored in, while waiting its turn to go into the machine.

Owner John Askew took delivery of the machine a few months ago and has been busy connecting with his regular restaurant, hospitality, food service and care facilities customer base in Gippsland, picking up their food waste every time he drops off their fresh produce orders.

One local café says it is making a huge difference to their food waste volume, reducing it by up to 70% - meaning less disposal costs for that business, and less greenhouse gas generating waste going into landfill.

Once a box of food waste is emptied into the machine, it's as simple as pressing a button and leaving it to do its magic via a fully automatic process of dehydration, sterilization and volume reduction. The food waste does all the work, with no need for water, sawdust or any other additives.

Its only demand is the electricity required to run it, and John has the environmental impact of that covered, with the solar panel covered roof at his Morwell business generating plenty of power for the operational requirements of the retail floor upstairs and the basement equipment below.

Each cycle takes around 6 hours to complete, and other than large hard bones, the machine can process all manner of food waste, and as soon as a cycle is finished and the machine emptied, it's ready to take on the next load.

So with the working hours of the business spreading across much of the 24 hours in each day, the machine is able to be in action around the clock, turning everything from meat scraps, fruit, bread and vegetables to coffee grinds, flower displays and fish guts and bones into a product that can be used as a fertilizer or a compost enhancer.

And for John, it's a closed loop when the fertilizer created by the food waste goes back into the soil a few kilometres away at Verduci Market Gardens, where a large number of Manny's Market Morwell produce lines are grown.

"To be able to return the fertiliser to a grower and see the positive impact that it is having on his crops is fantastic, and as we continue to build our stock levels of the food waste fertiliser, we plan to make it available for Gippslanders to buy to use in their own gardens " he said.

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Food & Fibre Gippsland Acting CEO Dr Nicola Watts is delighted to see initiative having a positive impact across a number of layers of the community and applauds the innovative collaboration that John has built with Rocco Verduci.

“Forty percent of everything that is produced in Australia ends up as waste at some stage of the cycle, whether it be in the harvesting, processing, transport or consumption phase “she said.

“The partnership that John and Rocco have forged is a winning combination, with the end consumer enjoying a quality product, and the soil benefitting from the fertiliser created from waste that would have just added to landfill”

“As an Industry partner of the Fight Food Waste Cooperative Research Centre, Food & Fibre Gippsland is very committed to helping and supporting our members and the Gippsland community as a whole to tackle the food waste problem - every little bit that we can all do as an individual or a business really does count “ Dr Watts concluded.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CALL JODY O'BRIEN 0416 222 899

Pics attached

- 1. LEFT: Rocco Verduci – Verduci Market Gardens RIGHT : John Askew – Manny’s Market Morwell**
- 2. Box on the left is the finished processed product and the box on the right is the food scraps that go into the machine**