MEDIA RELEASE

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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME SUPPORTS TO GIPPSLAND TEACHERS

East Gippsland teachers got a boost in their knowledge bank this week via a professional development workshop that aims to increase their capacity to incorporate food and fibre concepts into the classroom.

The PD programme, facilitated by Food & Fibre Gippsland's GIPPY Ag project in partnership with CQ University Australia via funding from the State Government of Victoria, has engaged with over 30 teachers across the region, in Morwell, Leongatha and Bairnsdale.

In each location the workshop has kicked off with interesting facts and figures about the $7 billion food and fibre sector in Gippsland, before delving into some practical activities, including Digital Farm Mapping, which involves looking at pastures via satellite, and "Sweet Science" where the teachers use a refractometer to test for sugars in fruits.

GIPPY Ag Project Manager Dr Amy Cosby says providing teachers with easy to use resources is a winning formula.

"The feedback we've received from every workshop has been 100% positive, with teachers really appreciative of the initiative and the flow on benefits it is going to create for their students "she said.

One of the key objectives of the programme is to increase the awareness of the diverse range of career opportunities that are available in the food and fibre sector, and one of the teachers participating in the Bairnsdale workshop was delighted with the depth of detail provided in the workshop that she can now share with her students.

"For our students who might not have considered a career in agriculture, the information that we've now got to share with them, along with the hands on practical tools means that as teachers, we've got a new box of tangible and engaging exercises to incorporate in our food & fibre lesson content " she said.

Connecting with industry is also integral to the success of the PD workshops, and Gippsland producers have been generous with their time, knowledge and insights.

Matt Zagami, the founder of AvaGrow Farms participated in a Q & A Session about the agricultural and horticultural industry in East Gippsland, how the sector is progressing into the future, what sort of jobs and career opportunities there are now and what the job landscape might look like in years to come.

He believes that technology and innovation are key to attracting the next generation of employees into agriculture.

"I really value being involved in activities like this where I can share what is happening in our industry, and give teachers some insights on how they can share that with their students in a way that generates enthusiasm about the possibilities of a career in agriculture"

"We need to show the students of today that our industry is viable and ready to employ them" he said.

Food & Fibre Gippsland Acting CEO, Dr Nicola Watts is delighted with the engagement that the programme has generated, indicating that this type of activity is an important part of the long-term strategy for capacity building in the region.

"Providing our educators with information and practical support to drive awareness of the opportunities to pursue a career in the food and fibre sector in Gippsland is an important part of the many collaborative ways we strive to engage across the region "she said.

The GIPPY Ag Project is an initiative of Food & Fibre Gippsland in partnership with CQ University Australia that is funded through the Victorian Government's Regional Skills Fund.

Since Term 1 this year, the project has been working with schools all over Gippsland to showcase the scientific and digital skills that are needed in the agricultural industry to attract the next generation workforce, so its implementation is also supporting 'workforce planning' capabilities across Gippsland agrifood sector.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CALL FOOD & FIBRE GIPPSLAND COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT MANAGER JODY O'BRIEN 0416 222 899.

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