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Food research centre to go ahead

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A new brand - Food Innovation New Zealand - is being established to market Kiwi food research expertise to the world.

A memorandum of understanding to develop the brand was signed between Massey University, AgResearch, Fonterra, Plant & Food Research (formerly HortResearch and Crop and Food Research), the Riddet Institute, and the BioCommerce Centre. The intention is to formally launch the brand in July.

"New Zealand's leading food science organisations have won a global reputation for excellence," said Steve Maharey, vice-chancellor of Massey University and chairman of the Food Innovation Steering Committee.

"Collaboration between the six founding partner organisations has helped grow the industry's reputation for providing New Zealand government and worldwide private sector clients with world-class food research services and capability.

"Our primary goal for establishing Food Innovation New Zealand is to attract more global food giants to commission research in New Zealand and to establish their own research facilities here."

Maharey said this would be achieved by:

- o offering potential global research customers one point of contact from which they can access all New Zealand's food science experts
- o formalising the existing collaboration between the partners
- o bringing teams together from across the partner organisations to meet customer needs
- o consolidating the partner organisations' global marketing efforts where appropriate; and
- o helping to up-skill New Zealand's food science experts through new career and research opportunities in New Zealand and abroad.

The partners involved in the project also aim to grow New Zealand's collective intellectual property in food production through collaboration that will provide the foundation for new products.

The world leader for this type of agri-food collaboration is Food Valley, based in Wageningen, Netherlands. Food Valley brings together private sector, state research and academic food science experts from Wageningen, across the Netherlands and beyond. Wageningen is world renowned for innovation in food science and also for the innovative food products the organisations located there produce.

"We would like to be recognised as the southern hemisphere's equivalent of Food Valley with a hub in the Manawatu but drawing on all of New Zealand's expertise," said Maharey.

Food Innovation New Zealand plans to strengthen its already good relationship with Food Valley and the organisations based in Wageningen. This will be achieved by growing relationships at all levels: organisation to organisation, research facility to research facility, food producer to food producer, university to university and city to city.

"Food Innovation New Zealand is a very exciting business venture and we are looking to expand and partner with other leading New Zealand organisations. We want to broaden our expertise and provide global food producers with very compelling reasons to bring their research to New Zealand." said Maharey.

