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Granite Belt Food Group Sets Agenda

Foodies in one Queensland region are a hive of activity, implementing a number of recommendations from the inaugural Granite Belt Food Forum.

At their June Forum, more than a dozen people nominated to work on the Granite Belt Food Group which was proposed as a sub-committee of Granite Belt Wine & Tourism Inc (GBWT).

This sub-committee was approved by the GBWT and at the first meeting of the Food Group Andrew Simpson was nominated chair for the group. Andrew is the Food & Beverage Training Manager at Queensland College of Wine Tourism.

The enthusiastic new Food Group has identified and prioritised a number of activities to progress in the current financial year.

- A category of **GBWT Membership for food growers** and development of a logo for their use on packaging, vehicles etc. (*see image below*)
- **Online Register** of growers and fresh produce. Two resources are proposed (a) GBWT grower members can be listed/searchable on the association's website. A broader based online register of all produce and producers in the community could be housed on GraniteNet.
- Development of a **Food Trail** – to be launched in November 2008 at the Brisbane Good Food & Wine Show.
- **Farmers Markets** – locally these are proposed in conjunction with Market in the Mountains, to begin in Spring 2008. Outside the region these are quarterly at Brisbane's South Bank.
- **Signature Dish** – in association with the Stanthorpe Show commencing in 2009
- **Food Events** – These include forthcoming promotions at Brisbane Ekka and The Brisbane Good Food & Wine Show in November, as well as overlap at Farmers Markets and the Signature Dish competition.
- **Food Provider** – While this was widely welcomed, it was considered a commercial opportunity for an individual and not a project for the food group.

Mr Simpson said, "There's a huge amount of passion and excitement in the group...it seems Granite Belt Food is really coming of age.

"The Food Group comprises a cross section of businesses from primary production through to food processing, retail and food service. From the ground up are industry leaders Harslett Farms who supply the chains, as well as niche organic farmer Ray Palmer who is keen to grow for the food service sector locally," he added.

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EDITOR'S NOTES

1. **Wine** The history of the Queensland wine industry dates back to the 1860s - and like all good wines it has developed with age. Of Queensland's current 1100 hectares planted to wine grapes, approximately half of these are on the Granite Belt. The Granite Belt is Queensland's premier wine region and one of ten wine regions in the state, of which only two have official GI status. The Granite Belt is home to approximately 50 wine cellar doors, the state's most awarded winemakers, plus the Queensland College of Wine Tourism – the first of its type in the world.
2. **Food** The Granite Belt is the only area in Queensland to produce apples: creating a gross value of approximately \$35m per annum (DPI&F 2006). Agriculture is the largest employer in the area, which

boasts a vibrant and diverse horticultural sector. In this part of Queensland, the food production sector is expected to experience an average annual growth rate of approximately 8.0% per annum, despite the drought. Over the 10 years to 2017, growth in the sector is expected to result in a 12.7% increase in the regional economy's turnover (source Darling Downs & South West Queensland Centre of Enterprise and AEC Group 2007.)

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