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MEDIA RELEASE

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Upgraded microwave rice facility ramps up production

The NSW Minister for Finance and Small Business, Damien Tudehope MLC, has today officially opened SunRice's revitalised microwave rice facility in Leeton following a \$4.5 million upgrade.

The upgrade was completed in March 2021 following an extensive research & development project which led to the installation of new equipment that will allow a revolutionary new cooking technique to be used in the production of SunRice's loved 90-second microwave rice pouches.

Minister Tudehope said SunRice worked with a number of small to medium enterprises across the Riverina to deliver the project.

"For this specific project, more than \$1 million of the \$4.5 million cost was spent locally by SunRice, with expert local providers of goods and services, including engineering, electrical installations, processing equipment and construction management," Minister Tudehope said.

"SunRice is a major driver of economic activity in the Riverina – providing employment to more than 500 people, partnering with more than 400 Riverina-based small and medium-sized businesses and generating direct economic expenditure in an average year of close to \$400 million."

SunRice CEO Rob Gordon said the new technique allowed the product to be cooked using a new heat treatment technique which improved the consumer eating experience, while also improving energy and water usage.

"Our microwave pouches are loved by our consumers across Australia and around the world – and now the product will be even better thanks to the commercialisation of home-grown research and development undertaken right here in the Riverina," Mr Gordon said.

"This revolutionary new technique will lead to an even better eating experience for our consumers. While our consumers already love the microwave rice pouches, this upgrade will allow for a softer, fluffier and tastier rice product – endorsed through consumer testing and research.

"SunRice is firmly committed to the communities of the Riverina, as demonstrated by this \$4.5 million investment which we have fully funded.

"We will also be investing more than \$2 million through changes to our packaging and marketing to communicate the product changes to consumers.

"This investment will allow us to manufacture a brand new product range right here in the Riverina, while providing our customers with an even higher quality range of microwave rice pouches.

"This project demonstrates the significant capability we have in advanced food manufacturing, and commercialisation of research and development initiatives which allow us to integrate even more effectively into domestic and global supply chains.

“Not only that, but this revolutionary new cooking technique also improves energy and water usage, creating environmental benefits.

“The new technique will also satisfy increasing demand for our microwave rice pouches in Australia and our markets around the world, maintaining local employment in value-added food manufacturing at our microwave rice facility in Leeton.

“SunRice is proud of the fact that we are an Australian food company selling high-value branded products in some 50 markets around the world, with much of the value-added manufacturing undertaken right here in the Riverina region of NSW.”

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