

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **New research to deliver more muscle for export heavyweight**

New Zealand's iconic Greenshell™ mussel is already the heavyweight of our aquaculture exports, now a new science and industry collaboration is set to give it even more muscle.

Cawthron Institute and Sanford Limited have joined forces to identify and validate the health benefits of Greenshell™ mussels, in particular looking at its potential anti-inflammatory qualities, improved joint and bone health and increased mobility. [Watch video.](#)

“Our aim is to add even more value to this gourmet delicacy by fully understanding and proving its known health benefits,” Cawthron Marine Lipids Chemist and programme leader, Dr Matt Miller, says.

New Zealand's Greenshell™ mussels attract \$280 million in export earnings each year for their highly desirable taste and plate appeal. While Greenshell™ mussels are currently primarily promoted as a whole product, this iconic delicacy has many hidden talents waiting to be realised.

“The aim of this research is to assist the transition of Greenshell™ mussels from the relatively low price “commodity protein” market to a market position where products are valued for their unique nutrition and functional properties,” Sanford General Manager Innovation Andrew Stanley says.

The programme will generate scientific evidence of the health benefits of Greenshell™ mussels and assist the industry to identify and develop optimal Greenshell™ mussel-based functional food products that will appeal to the emerging market of wealthy, aging, health conscious consumers – predominantly in China.

The programme was one of seven science and business collaborations to receive \$1 million over three years through the Government's High Value Nutrition (HVN) National Science Challenge, announced today following a contestable funding round. The HVN challenge aims to invest in projects that build the science required to develop innovative new foods.

“This new research programme will build on our longstanding, successful collaboration with Sanford, our 20 years' research towards transforming the Greenshell™ mussel aquaculture industry, and Sanford's food processing and production knowledge base,” Dr Miller says.

Sanford is a large and long-established fishing company devoted entirely to harvesting, farming, processing, storage and marketing of quality seafood and aquaculture products. The company is New Zealand's biggest producer and exporter of Greenshell™ mussels.

“Our Sanford innovation team is focused on creating value from by-products, adding value to existing products and, in the process, increasing our scientific knowledge to enable us to raise the per kilo return to the company,” Mr Stanley says.

“It's important because the seafood industry is somewhat behind other industries in its investment in food research and food science knowledge. Until recently, Sanford has

focused on selling commodity products while operating in a complex and challenging industry. There has been some food science but nowhere near enough.”

The research programme, *‘Musseling up: high-value Greenshell™ mussel foods’*, includes researchers from Massey University and the Christchurch Clinical Studies Trust. The programme will be advised and guided by an international technical advisory group of industry, food technology and clinical nutrition experts from New Zealand, China and the United Kingdom. As part of the programme, a clinical research team will measure the concentration of active ingredients in the mussels and how much is absorbed by human volunteers, to optimise absorption.

“They’ll be eating different types of mussel food products so we can determine the ideal format for highest absorption of bio-actives for maximum consumer health benefits,” Dr Miller says. “We’re looking at what’s in the mussel, how they’re consumed, and what happens when they’re consumed.”

Mr Stanley says the programme is the first of its kind.

“There has previously been extensive research into a range of Greenshell™ mussel extracts and powders but never before has there been a coordinated collaboration focused on retaining that functional value in the food itself, which potentially could transform the aquaculture sector into a high value, large scale functional food industry,” he says.

Cawthron is New Zealand’s largest independent science organisation and a world-leader in aquaculture research with a proven track record of turning science into commercial reality. Its Chief Executive, Professor Charles Eason, says Cawthron is pleased to once again support business-led research of this type.

“This is exactly the type of outcome-focused science we excel at. The new programme will enable us to develop very novel approaches to a challenging area,” Professor Eason says. “This is about discovery and novel molecules biochemistry. We’ll be developing new science and drawing on multiple disciplines, from fundamental bio-chemistry right through to clinical trials for consumer health benefits.”

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**For more information please contact:**

Matt Miller  
‘Musseling Up’ Research Programme Leader, Cawthron Institute  
Phone: +64 3 548 2319 or +64 21 204 4438  
Email: [matt.miller@cawthron.org.nz](mailto:matt.miller@cawthron.org.nz)

[www.cawthron.org.nz](http://www.cawthron.org.nz)

Andrew Stanley  
General Manager Innovation, Sanford Limited  
Phone: +64 9 373 8325 or +64 27 495 9678  
Email: [astanley@sanford.co.nz](mailto:astanley@sanford.co.nz)

[www.sanford.co.nz](http://www.sanford.co.nz)