Budget 2014 establishes a Food Industry Development Group to strengthen the Territory’s $580 million primary industry sector and boost agriculture, horticulture and aquaculture development.

Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries, Willem Westra van Holthe, said the new Group would help drive economic development in food production and meet Asia’s demand for quality produce.

“Asia continues to grow at a rapid pace and we need to be ready to meet its demand for Territory produce if we are to unlock our full potential as producers of high quality, safe and secure food commodities,” Mr Westra van Holthe said.

“That’s why Budget 2014 provides $1 million over two years to progress the development of a new industry group, as well as committing $9.6 million over four years to expand the Government’s land and water assessment program to locate new areas for potential agricultural development.

“The Country Liberals are committed to sustaining and creating jobs in the primary industry sector – these two projects will see a positive ripple effect throughout the Territory well into the future.

“The new Food Industry Development Group initiative acknowledges the huge potential to export produce to Asia, and this funding will help realise this opportunity.

“The Group’s focus will be to establish robust pathways to drive food exports into niche, high value markets in Asia which is a great initiative to develop Northern Australia’s capacity for food production.”

Mr Westra van Holthe said the Territory would need to differentiate itself from international competitors keen to meet the rising demands of Asia’s growing population.

“The land and water assessment program will play a key role in unlocking the Territory’s agricultural potential,” Mr Westra van Holthe said.

“Assessment of available water resources is critical in determining the land suitability of an area - land and water assessments will provide high quality land and water suitability information and mapping essential for underpinning successful agricultural developments.

“The availability of this data is key to accelerating and attracting private investment, and will also reduce the risk to investors, potential business failures and mitigate potential land, water, and flora and fauna degradation.

“The key to maintaining a competitive position is to have a better understanding of Asia’s niche markets that we can participate in to ensure necessary actions are undertaken to competitively position ourselves in the food supply chains of the future.”

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