The first sample shipment of Northern Territory produce leaves for Dubai in the United Arab Emirates today.

Primary Industry and Fisheries Minister, Kon Vatskalis, inspected some of the produce this morning at NT Seafoods in Winellie.

“Dubai is one of the most specialised top-end niche markets in the world,” said Mr Vatskalis.

“It is one of the fastest growing economic regions, with a five star hotel sector which is second to none.

“This is a golden opportunity to get Territory produce into the hands of master chefs and has the potential to suit our production times and export capabilities very well.”

The initial shipment is comprised of several varieties of mango, as well as barramundi, banana prawns, mudcrabs and goldband snapper. A second shipment will follow in about a fortnight.

“The leading chefs in the UAE all work and talk with one another, which is why getting a shipment such as this into the hands of one of the premier chefs is our foot-in-the-door,” said Mr Vatskalis.

“By working with Barakat International, the country’s largest and best established fresh produce supplier, we are laying the ground-work for a long and prosperous future association.”

Barakat International has been operating in Dubai for 25 years. It is experiencing massive growth of up to 30% per annum as the country’s 85% expatriate population demands fresh fruit, vegetables and meat.

The Air Cargo Village at Dubai Airport handles 90,000 tones of freight per month and has specialist cool rooms and delicate produce facilities, as well as specialist facilities for handling flowers.

“Officers from the Department of Business, Industry and Resource Development (DBIRD) have started this process, but there’s a long way to go,” said Mr Vatskalis.

“This shipment of sample Territory produce is nothing more than an appetiser. Hopefully it will interest them sufficiently to want regular, large scale shipments.”