

## Government Funding For Developing Fish Products In The Lab

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Press Release: Plant and Food Research

Culturing new seafood products in the laboratory is the focus of a new \$9.6 million programme funded by the New Zealand Government.



Georgina Dowd in the lab. Copyright © Plant & Food Research. All rights reserved.

The new five-year Endeavour Fund programme will allow Plant & Food Research scientists, led by Dr Georgina Dowd, to develop new fish cell production systems in a New Zealand context. This technology has the potential to change the way we produce seafood and generate marine products (for example, marine collagen) through a technology known as cellular agriculture (CellAg). CellAg has been developed for animal products – with cultivated chicken available in Singapore and the USA – and developing a production system for fish is an opportunity for NZ to meet the global demand for new sustainable seafood and marine products. The programme will also investigate the New Zealand social and cultural aspects associated with acceptance of cultured fish products, including Māori views with respect to taonga species.

Four Smart Ideas projects from Plant & Food Research were also funded through the Endeavour Fund process. Dr Wei Hu will lead a project to develop methods for assessing soil vulnerability that support sustainable soil management practices. Dr Hayley Ridgway and Justine Larrouy will investigate the microbiome of vineyards as a method of controlling grapevine trunk disease, which costs New Zealand growers \$130 million a year in crop losses. Dr Maren Wellenreuther will develop a method for aging pāua based on epigenetic DNA testing to support sustainable pāua fisheries management. Dr Andrew Dare and Dr Andrew Allan will investigate whether compounds in silvagine, a species of kiwifruit, can be used as a control method for feral cat populations.

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment's Endeavour Fund supports researchers in developing science with potential impact for New Zealand. In the 2024 round, the Fund invested \$236 million in 19 research programmes and 53 Smart Ideas, aimed at catalysing and testing innovative research ideas with high potential.

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