



Naturally Good owners Connie Manglaviti (left) and husband Frank with Carmelo Montalto.

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Gluten-free profit

A THOMASTOWN family business is tasting the success of producing healthy alternatives for food allergy sufferers.

Frank and Connie Manglaviti own and operate Naturally Good, a company specialising in making gluten-free food products.

The products including cookies, rice cakes and the popular D'Lush chocolate biscuit, are sold in Coles and Safeway supermarkets and health food shops and are now beginning to be exported to New Zealand.

Mr Manglaviti bought the business, which has been operating for 20 years, two years ago.

His wife joined him a 12 months later.

"There is a growing need for products such as this because allergies and intolerance to foods is growing all the time," Mrs Manglaviti said. "I'm no expert as to why, but I think it might perhaps be because of preservatives in food or maybe pollutants.

"It seems that people are passing the allergies on to

their children." Naturally Good operates out of a small factory in Thomastown and is a part of the Plenty Valley Food Group.

Mrs Manglaviti said the group had helped the business grow.

"Running a small business can be difficult because there can be some issues with things like home-brands," she said.

"I think the northern suburbs are an exciting area for food - there's everything you can imagine and they (food group) really help out."

United, firms are cooking

THE Plenty Valley Food Group is only 2½-years old but is already giving northern food manufacturers an appetising edge over the competition.

The group, a joint venture between Whittlesea and Hume councils, has become one of the most important tools for food manufacturers in the northern suburbs wanting to compete in the already crowded industry.

The group works as an industry cluster, providing seminars for business owners, network opportunities, training courses, information on exporting products overseas and on how to deal directly with supermarkets.

Whittlesea Council economic development director John Francis said the group was created after a survey of businesses in the region and the issues they faced.

"We found there was a concentration of small and large food manufacturing businesses in the region," he said.

"These food manufacturers all faced similar types of issues... that are difficult to deal with in isolation, but as a group they can be worked through."

Businesses wanting to join the group or would like more information can call Food Cluster Co-ordinator Marshall Dwyer on 9217 2148 or email marshall.dwyer@whittlesea.vic.gov.au