

Food deal boost for producers

BY ENGELBERT SCHMIDL

THE global halal food market is worth more than \$200 billion and growing, according to Austrade, the Australian Government's foreign trade organisation, and Whittlesea food producers are poised to capitalise on this burgeoning trade.

The Plenty Food Group, a cooperative enterprise between the Whittlesea and Hume City councils, is set to tap into this market, opening up potential export markets to South-East Asia and the Middle East for local producers by developing a premium halal food brand with the Brunei Government.

Plenty Food Group spokesman Marshall Dwyer said the initiative would create export and employment opportunities for the northern suburbs.

The new food brand is being developed with the aid of the Federal Government.

The International Halal Brand initiative will be launched next month with the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the Plenty Food Group, Hume City Council, Melbourne Airport, Kangan Batman TAFE and the Brunei Government.

The agreement, to be signed in Brunei on 16 August, will see the introduction of the first dedicated international brand of halal food to Muslim consumers.

The initiative came about partly because the oil-rich, South-East Asian nation has endeavoured to expand its economy beyond its petroleum base.

The Sultan of Brunei, the country's leader, is among the world's richest men.

Halal food is sourced and prepared according to Muslim dietary laws set out in the Koran.