

AITUTAKI'S ATAI FARMS WINS AGRITECH GRANT FOR SUSTAINABLE EGG PRODUCTION

The Ministry of Finance and Economic Management (MFEM) is pleased to announce it has awarded Aitutaki Dreaming Ltd a SMART AgriTech Scheme grant to support an upgrade to their free-range egg farm Atai Farms.

The upgrade will introduce improvements for more efficient and environmentally sustainable egg production on Aitutaki.

Atai Farms have already acquired over 200 chicks and are in the process of rebuilding their free-range egg farm, set in their established fruit tree plantation. With help from the Agritech grant, Atai Farms will install extra rainwater storage, solar power energy to supply a water

pump, improved coop and run design for laying efficiencies, and automated self-waterers and feeders for improved egg production and labour efficiencies.

Atai Farms' Katrina Armstrong says: "Our free-range egg farm fits nicely into our current business model, increasing sustainability across each of our businesses - Ootu Aquaponics, Atai Farms Produce Supply, Koru Cafe and Koru Bakehouse. For example, eggs laid will supply our cafe and bakehouse, food waste from all of our businesses will provide feed for our animals, and animal waste will provide fertiliser for our plantations."

Atai Farms will also supply the Aitutaki community with freshly laid free range eggs on a daily basis and are aiming to also supply Rarotonga and other Pa Enua in future. "Our mission is to become the leading free-range egg farm in the nation," Katrina says.

With the Cook Islands' agricultural sector still facing land and labour shortages, projects like Atai Farms that increase productivity from existing land make a valuable contribution to growing our local food-basket to meet local and tourism demand.

