



Tasmanian COUNTRY

The **AG-FEST** newspaper

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Taste is in our nature
TASSIE VEGETABLES

Poppy crusade



Aiming to restore Australia's once dominant position

Minister Llewellyn

through cost-saving technology, he said.

The new price comes on top of a 25 per cent increase paid to farmers who grew last season's small crop.

Mr Ritchie said acreages were likely to increase to 5000ha or 6000ha in coming seasons to meet \$100 million worth of orders.

The company's factory at Mt Joy, near Cressy, was opened by Primary Industries Minister David Llewellyn on Tuesday.

TPI Enterprises first contacted the Tasmanian Poppy Growers Association and regulators in 2005.

By August last year, it had all the necessary federal and state government permits.

Until then, many industry players, including association and Tasmanian Poppy Advisory and Control Board figures, were openly sceptical of the company's commitment.

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TPI rides to poppy rescue

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Mr Ritchie in February last year revealed the company's intention to deploy breakthrough technology to slash processing costs and reverse a 75 per cent decline in the industry's value since 2001.

He said the \$7 million factory would use patented technology that steered clear of toxic, cumbersome and environmentally unfriendly organic solvents.

On Tuesday, Mr Ritchie said the company would invest a further \$10 million in research and manufacturing over two years, adding 15 jobs to an existing 20.



WHITE KNIGHT: Jarrod Ritchie with part of last season's poppy crop. Picture: BRUCE MOUNSTER

Mr Llewellyn congratulated Mr Ritchie for "rising to the challenge and identifying a cheaper, safer, more efficient process for extracting opium from the poppy".

"Jarrod is aiming to restore Australia's once dominant position as the

supplier of nearly half of the world's controlled and legally manufactured morphine," he said.

"He has assessed that the world market for pain-relief products is increasing, thereby creating the opportunity for a third successful poppy producer in Tasmania."

TPI enterprises was an outstanding example of a start up company, said company chairman Ross Dobinson on Tuesday.

"Some highly innovative technology in an extremely tight time frame — their achievements are nothing short of remarkable," he said.