

Triabunna mussel farm leads way in processing

By PHIL BECK

SPRING Bay Seafoods at Triabunna has established an Australian first — a machine that takes the beard off mussels.

Economic Development Minister Lara Giddings announced yesterday that the company was the country's first to use equipment to de-beard mussels.

"For the first time in Australia the mussel beard is removed mechanically at the post-harvest stage before the



QUALITY: Market niche filled, says Lara Giddings.

mussels are cleaned, graded and then packed," Ms Giddings said.

"It will enable the company to meet and grow market demand for pre-prepared, ready-to-cook fresh mussels.

"It is yet another example of an innovative Tasmanian company, based in a regional area, finding a niche market and filling that market with high-quality produce."

Spring Bay Seafoods managing director Phil Lamb said the de-bearding equipment had been built to the company's specifications in New Zealand.

He said the company had spent a total of \$300,000 on the project, including research and development and \$200,000 for the equipment.

"Mussels are messy and

time-consuming to prepare," Mr Lamb said.

"They are something the chef always gives to the apprentice to clean."

The company runs one of the largest mussel farms in Australia, with its beds located in Greater Spring Bay near Maria Island.

Last month it harvested a record 80 tonnes, introducing a second shift at its factory and eight extra staff to process the increased volumes.

The company aims to further increase production to 1000 tonnes a year by 2007.

Mr Lamb said the company had introduced mussels to its operations four years ago because starfish attacks had made scallop farming unreliable.

Spring Bay Seafoods markets throughout Australia and South-East Asia.

The company has received State and Commonwealth assistance under the New Industry development Program as well as a \$30,000 State Government grant to investigate the feasibility of establishing a mussel processing facility at Triabunna.