

**MEDIA RELEASE
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Friday 30 January 2015

Social enterprise Wilding & Co wins multi-year international contract, and takes the win for 'most improved' Launchpad team

Securing an international multi-year contract to sell essential oils has scored Queenstown based social enterprise Wilding & Co the title of 'most improved' team in Ākina's Launchpad programme. This is the second milestone award the team has won, and recognises their progress in finding customers and building partnerships while in the Launchpad programme.

"The category of most improved was one of the hardest to judge," said co-judge Tina Porou, Head of Communications and Sustainability at Contact Energy. "Every team was at a different phase in the business planning process when they began the Launchpad programme, and that's what we've taken into account in the judging of this particular award."

Wilding & Co harvests young wilding pines, which have a devastating effect on New Zealand's natural environment, and turns them into high-value essential oils which can be used in consumer products. The team were already operating on a small scale when they joined the Launchpad programme, selling essential oils locally and on-line.

Ms Porou said "since they started Launchpad the team has developed two new products, pine oil candles, and a pine bud soda in partnership with Six Barrel Soda Co based in Wellington. The first three batches of soda, which first went on shelves in December, sold out."

"Another major success which impressed the judging panel is the up-coming signing of a major international contract to supply essential oils to the United States of America. We recognise the work it's taken the team at Wilding & Co to reach this point, and we congratulate them."

"Although they have secured a contract they are still tirelessly seeking investment to build infrastructure and grow this idea, as well as talking to other international suppliers," said Ms Porou.

"Wilding & Co has shown clear commitment to addressing the environmental impact of wilding pines. The team believe that producing essential oils in bulk quantities is the only way to match their intervention with the size of the problem caused by wilding pines in New Zealand. This is where the team's passion lies."

"We are extremely proud of Wilding & Co's achievements, and congratulate the team on their successes," said Ms Porou.

The 'most improved' milestone is the third of three awards sponsored by Contact Energy for the Launchpad programme, alongside an additional \$20,000 people's choice award to be chosen by the public in the coming months.

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For more information on Wilding & Co go to www.wilding.co.

Contact Energy Limited

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About Contact

Contact is one of New Zealand's largest electricity generators and retailers. We keep the lights burning, the hot water flowing and the BBQ fired up for around 567,500 customer across the country. Powering the country with electricity, natural gas and LPG, our team of around 1,050 lives, works and operates in communities throughout New Zealand. www.contact.co.nz

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