

FAMILY JUICING FIRM IS A LITTLE BOTTLER

A DECISION to tap into the Warwick region's rich local produce is starting to bear fruit for the family-run Grove Juice.

Operations manager Tim Willis (below) runs the Warwick side of the business - the Grove Juicing factory - while his dad and company owner Greg works between town and the bottling factory in Brisbane.

Greg Willis says the juicing factory he started in Warwick in 2011 is producing about 50,000 litres of juice a day. The Brisbane operation bottles about three times that amount.

The company not only bottles its own juice but the fresh and reconstituted juices of other brands.

Grove has relationships with the major retailers, bottling their economy and premium-branded juices, and a long-term contract with Boost Juice.

The joint venture with Boost - which began eight years ago - allows Grove to develop, supply, market and distribute all prepackaged Boost Juice varieties in its 350ml and 1 litre bottles.

Grove employs about 100 people and,

according to Willis senior, is "charging quickly to \$50 million" in turnover. The expansion of Grove into Warwick may not stop at the juicing factory, with a new \$10 million bottling facility in the design process.

"For Grove to commit to Warwick, we need to have the long-term contracts with our major retailers sorted out, which hopefully isn't too far away," Greg Willis says.

An integral part of setting up shop in the southwest was Grove moving into the juicing of apples and, with one of Queensland's biggest apple suppliers 60km down the road at Stanthorpe, it made sense.

"We buy 100 per cent of our apples from Stanthorpe. We are trying to build our relationship with the local growers and try to get a bit of mutual support," Tim Willis says.

"We are here for the long term and we need to work with these guys year in, year out, and make sure they are supported in the heavy years so that in the lighter years we are still getting the fruit."

The value of land played a major part in the decision to move to Warwick, with Tim Willis saying they bought the land the factory is built on at a quarter of the price it would have been in Brisbane.

"The transport of our fruit was also another reason, we bring all our fruit up from the east coast of Australia to here. It is on a road train route and you can run B-doubles in here and heading south we are on the main route to Sydney, Melbourne, wherever you want to go."

Grove is currently working non-stop in Warwick and Brisbane, and until the bottling plant is built in town, the company will be working above and beyond its capacity.

