



Food and Fibre Great South Coast report card



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The Great South Coast Food and Fibre Council ('the Council') formed in 2017 to further the region's enormous potential for food and fibre production.

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The Council, which meets monthly, has representation from a range of commodities across the region. An Executive Officer was appointed in April 2017 and a part-time Project/Administration Support Officer joined the team in April 2018.

The Council's strategic direction is guided by the Great South Coast Food and Fibre Action Plan. As at June 2019, the Council had commenced 26 of the 42 actions identified across the Plan's eight Platforms.

The Food and Fibre Action Plan applies to the entire Great South Coast region – an area extending from the South Australian border to Colac, taking in the Grampians and south west Victorian coastal areas. With its reliable rainfall and rich soils, this region supports a vibrant food and fibre sector, including red meat production, grains and cropping, aquaculture, forestry, wool and dairying.

Already a food and fibre powerhouse, our region has enormous potential as well as an economic imperative to grow its food and fibre output. This will have a dramatic, positive impact, delivering prosperity, jobs and stronger communities.

Our Platforms

- Build our Regional Identity
- Champion Food and Fibre Advocacy
- Nurture Food and Fibre Careers
- Realise the Water Opportunity
- Grow Agri-tourism Channels
- Increase Regional Value-add
- Drive Investment and Business Transition
- Lift Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Productivity

WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED

// Build our Regional Identity

“Our plan is to grow awareness of the Great South Coast’s food and fibre regions, credentials and areas of competitive advantage”.

+ Achieved:

- Built Great South Coast Food and Fibre Council with stakeholders from across the region; Council Charter developed; funding secured for three years; EO employed in 2017; Administration and project support employed in 2018.
- Prioritised eight platforms and actions; Council committees formed for Irrigation, for Education and for Finance.
- Formed a cohesive and united regional ‘voice’.
- Identified the need for an industry ‘image re-set’; developed a 12-month marketing and communication plan; developed a new brand for Food and Fibre Great South Coast.
- Established communications streams, including website and social media.
- Created an e-prospectus to showcase regional investment opportunities.

> Next steps:

- Evolution of the Council as an incorporated entity; exploration of alternate funding future opportunities.
- Establish the Great South Coast Food and Fibre brand, building our gravitas with government and investors.
- Deliver marketing and communications plan, delivering ‘image re-set’ campaigns (three-year horizon), showcasing our strengths via story-telling, business cases, testimonials and more.
- Enhance collaboration between local government to support a regional approach to food and fibre opportunities.

// Champion Food and Fibre Advocacy

“Our plan is to successfully influence food and fibre policy for the region by advocating with a coordinated voice that represents every sector to drive growth and capacity building.”

+ Achieved:

- Established the Food and Fibre Council as a leadership voice for food and fibre in our region.
- Successfully collaborated with industry bodies to achieved a unified voice on specific issues.
- Made representations at Ministerial level in relation to important policy areas, including energy, power infrastructure, public investment in irrigation infrastructure, provisions of skills, education and career pathways in food and fibre.
- Enhanced food and fibre vocational and tertiary education in the region.
- Successfully lobbied for change in water irrigation policy in the Great South Coast region.

> Next steps:

- Influence the design of fit-for-purpose policies for our region in all relevant areas, including water, education and infrastructure.
- Leverage our expanded influence to advocate for an increased and more equitable share of enabling public investment at a level that better reflects our position as a key agriculture powerhouse for Australia.
- With continued talk and some action on regionalisation of government departments, we will continue to represent the region’s case.



// Nurture Food and Fibre Careers

“To build capacity to grow all our food and fibre sectors, we must attract keen and talented young people to take on the myriad of food and fibre pathways.”

+ Achieved:

- Our industry’s need to attract skilled people to work across all our food and fibre industries was prioritised early as a precursor to future growth.
- Education committee formed and identified the need to promote career opportunities in our schools to young people and their parents during the formative phase of their career planning.
- Business case developed to attract government funding for a Food and Fibre Careers Marketing and Promotion role. This remains a high priority.
- A ‘Career Pathway Matrix’ is being developed to as a resource for young people planning their educational and career options.
- Leadership and collaboration to support the introduction of an Agribusiness major at Deakin University’s Business School.
- Support for the reintroduction of a Certificate qualification for trainees entering agriculture – predominantly dairy.
- Identified a short-term need to expand skilled migration to the Great South Coast, resulting in the establishment of a Designated Area Migration Agreement (DAMA) lead by Warrnambool City Council and supported by neighbouring Shires.

> Next steps:

- Food and fibre careers remains a focus for the future. Work is underway to secure funding for the marketing and promotion of food and fibre careers.
- A regional marketing and communications strategy will seek to tackle the industry’s current ‘image problem’, working to expose a new generation to the myriad of career opportunities.
- There is scope to broaden the adoption of food and fibre education into primary and secondary school curriculum. The region already has excellent educational models in this regard, aspects of which can be rolled out across the region.

// Realise the Water Opportunity

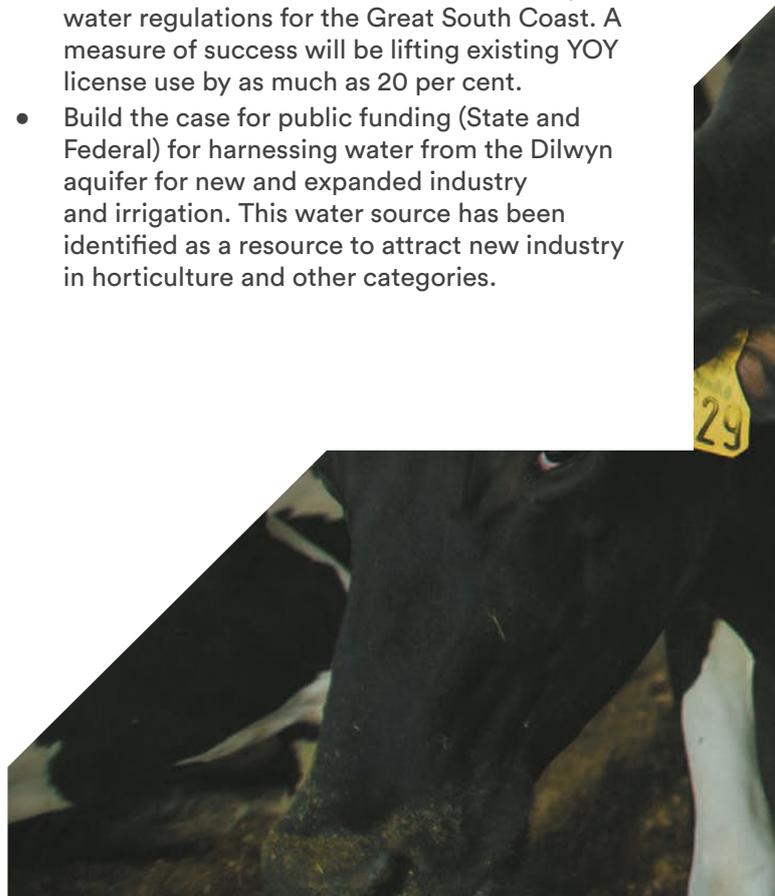
“The plan is to unlock the latent capacity to grow output and value through use of the region’s underutilised irrigation water resources.”

+ Achieved:

- Successfully advocated for changes to regulations, clearing the way for more efficient trading of the region’s underground water licenses. This has been a slow, but common-sense approach to encourage trading and provide leadership to better utilise underground water resources.
- Promoted and demonstrated the potential economic value creation opportunity in harnessing water from the as-yet untapped Dilwyn aquifer through small pump and pipe schemes.
- Sought legal and expert advice as to what was possible under the Victoria Water Act. This advice has suggested viable alternative solutions to create more water use from the unused water license pool.
- Put forward common-sense trading alternatives to allow movement of small stream take licenses.

> Next steps:

- Advocate for further common-sense change in water regulations for the Great South Coast. A measure of success will be lifting existing YOY license use by as much as 20 per cent.
- Build the case for public funding (State and Federal) for harnessing water from the Dilwyn aquifer for new and expanded industry and irrigation. This water source has been identified as a resource to attract new industry in horticulture and other categories.



+ Achieved:

Support for the reintroduction of a Certificate qualification for trainees entering agriculture – predominantly dairy.



// Grow our Agri-tourism Channels

“To develop a bold, vibrant and connected agri-tourism sector across the whole region that showcases the region’s food and fibre industry story to visitors and provides the linkages for these visitors to access products and experiences.”

+ Achieved:

- Engaged with agri-tourism operators, noting their desire to see action in connectivity, linkages for providers and actionable, whole-of-region activities.
- Engaged with Grampians Tourism and Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism.
- Surveyed and developed three areas for action – connectivity between, along and through driving trails with a food and fibre bias in the Great South Coast; linking providers and products; linking with farm stay and experience providers.
- Funded a project with Leadership Great South Coast to identify gateways to the region at which to locate electronic, integrated food and fibre trail signage.

> Next steps:

- Develop and seek funding for a project to install food and fibre signage across the region.
- Engage with local government, industry and tourism bodies to support food and fibre trails, ensuring they are understood and in place prior to electronic signage installation.
- Develop a project for ‘virtual shopping’ the region’s products and providers, linking them via existing platforms.

// Increase Regional Value-add

“To identify and lead the development of potential opportunities that add value to our primary commodities building on our successful food manufacturing base, but also to capitalise on our expertise in service and support industries where we can lead Australia.”

+ Achieved:

- Developed a dynamic e-prospectus showcasing our regional advantages, including resources and expertise.
- Developed a marketing and communications plan to challenge current negative perceptions of the sector.

> Next steps:

- Leverage the region’s livestock expertise with the creation of a Centre for Livestock Excellence, incorporating a shopfront (virtual or ‘bricks and mortar’) for interstate and international customers to access genetics and genetic supplies.
- Initial modelling has been undertaken to develop a canola oil plant in this region. Two groups have expressed interest and this project will now move to the feasibility stage.



> Next steps:

Enhance collaboration between local government to support a regional approach to food and fibre opportunities.



// Drive Investment and Business Transition

“To attract investment to the region and to build the capacity for existing businesses to invest and grow.”

+ Achieved:

- Provided advice and support to the Regional Grain Group investigating the concept of a canola oil plant in this region.
- Explored possible value-add projects that may be suitable in the Great South Coast, including seaweed production.
- Developed and represented a case to senior ministers on the potential and opportunity to regionalise government departments into our region.

> Next steps:

- Continue the discussion in relation to the potential for regionalisation of government departments.
- Develop and promote new land occupancy and agribusiness models to support long-term business transition.
- Advocate to reduce the reliance on bank finance by fostering new models of ownership such as equity partnerships.
- Continue to promote the region as a destination worthy of capital investment.

// Lift Innovation and Entrepreneurism

“To build on and increase productivity efficiency and sustainability through fostering best practice and to drive change through innovation and entrepreneurship.”

+ Achieved:

- Supported innovation events across the region, including an Innovation Day Forum and the innovation stage of the Rural Expo.
- Supported the establishment of ‘Unearthed’ – an incubator approach to foster and develop invention and innovation in the region. Unearthed was a state-funded project delivered across three local government areas with Great South Coast Food and Fibre Council backing.

> Next steps:

- Collaborate with Sheepvention Rural Expo to bring speakers to our region for innovation presentations and discussions.
- Collaborate to improve productivity through best practice in irrigation, primarily in dairy.





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