



AUSTRALIAN FOOD SOVEREIGNTY ALLIANCE

Response to Capital Food and Fibre Strategy Discussion Paper

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1CEBav93xZUOqDoCE9FKUUiRdrudkwi8c7WhfeSlh90M/edit?usp=sharing>

27 February 2022

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Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance

In consultation with Canberra City Farm and Southern Harvest Association

We thank the committee for providing an opportunity to make a submission. AFSA welcomes all further opportunities to participate in this Strategy and hope that the ACT Government will continue to facilitate robust stakeholder engagement across the agricultural and food sector.

About the Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance (AFSA)	3
Context	4
What is your vision for the future of food production in the ACT? How would you express it?	5
What are the key elements of success we should capture in the vision?	6
Thinking of your preferred vision for food and fibre in the ACT and Region, are these the right goals?	6
Are there other key goals that the Strategy should include and why?	7
What would success for each goal look like?	7
How can the barriers for achieving these goals be Addressed?	8
Towards goal one	8
How can we best support the incorporation of First Nations land management and traditional farming expertise?	8
How do you think we can best support a thriving urban agriculture sector that is founded on ecological sustainability and community wellbeing?	10
Recommendations	11
What is the role of government, producers and the broader community?	13
Role of Government	13
Role of Broader Community	14
What key actions can farmers take to increase the ecological health of our agricultural land?	15
What practices do we need to change, or reconsider?	16
Which ones should we promote?	16
What are important considerations for urban agriculture to ensure it supports ecological health?	16
Towards goal two	17
What are your top concerns for future droughts?	17
What direct or indirect actions that can build drought resiliency can be taken that suit our region?	17
What are the costs/benefits of those actions?	18
Are there barriers preventing them to be taken up right now?	18
How could the ACT Government support you to build resilience?	18
What opportunities are there for carbon sequestration and net zero emissions farming and innovation that also increase drought resiliency?	18
Towards goal three	19
What needs to happen to allow the ACT and Region's food and fibre industries continue to grow?	19
What do you think should be the role of government to promote more local food and fibre production and manufacture?	24
What are the opportunities for agri-tourism in the ACT?	25
Should we foster commercial opportunities for community- based enterprises to help increase access and success for new businesses?	26

Towards goal four	26
How do we encourage the adoption of new technologies and innovations, particularly those that diversify agricultural production and ensure it is sustainable across the landscape?	26
Towards goal five	28
How do we enable younger generations and people from diverse cultural backgrounds to gain the skills and experience to generate new agricultural enterprises in the ACT?	28
How can we encourage cross-cultural knowledge exchange and connection through local food?	29
In what ways if any can urban agriculture contribute to community wellbeing?	29

About the Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance (AFSA)

The Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance (AFSA) is a farmer-led civil society organisation of people working towards socially-just and ecologically-sound food and agriculture systems. The democratic participation of First Peoples, smallholders and local communities in decision-making processes is integral to these efforts.

AFSA provides a balanced voice to represent smallholders' and local communities' interests at all levels of government. We connect smallholders for farmer-to-farmer knowledge sharing, assist government in instituting scale-appropriate and consistent regulations and standards, and advocate for fair access for smallholders to local markets.

We are part of a robust global network of civil society organisations involved in food sovereignty and food security policy development and advocacy. We are members of the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC), La Via Campesina (the global movement of peasant farmers), and Urgenci (the International Network for Community-Supported Agriculture). We also support the Australasian representative on the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism (CSM), which relates to the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS).

Our vision is to enable regenerative and agroecological farms to thrive. This has taken on an added salience in the face of the increasing impacts of the climate crisis and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Australians care more than ever about the way their food is produced and how and where they can access it, with a growing awareness of its social, environmental, and economic impacts. Nutritious food produced locally in ethical and ecologically-sound ways is increasingly in demand, and governments must facilitate and encourage the emergence and viability of agroecology and regenerative agriculture embedded in localised food systems with short and often direct supply chains, thereby protecting the environment and human and animal health. Inextricable to this vision is the need to honestly and truthfully account for the land's needs. As such, AFSA works to increase understanding of and appreciation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples connection to and care for Country, the imposed coloniality on Country, and decolonising efforts therefore are areas of our concern. We aim to put First Peoples knowledge first in best practice of healing Country and sustaining life.

We work extensively with primary food producers and eaters across every state and territory in Australia. Our committee has consisted of published academics from the University of Melbourne, RMIT, Deakin University, University of Tasmania, University of Sydney, QUT, and UWA. We have also had representation from farmers from every state, and local advocates and campaigners such as Open Food Network, Food Connect, Friends of the Earth, Regrarians, Fair Food Brisbane, and the Permaculture Network.

Our vision is to enable regenerative and agroecological farming businesses and local communities to thrive.

As a key stakeholder and representative body of small- and medium-scale producers Australia-wide, AFSA welcomes the opportunity to submit on the Capital Food and Fibre Strategy.

Context

Proposed **goals** from the Capital Food and Fibre Strategy are:

1. Transition to ecologically sustainable food and fibre production supported by strong environmental stewardship to ensure our region has healthy soils, water and air.
2. Build the drought and climate change resilience of the ACT farm sector by identifying and encouraging practices that best fit the region's conditions.

3. Increase the capacity to produce food and fibre locally to shorten supply chains and reduce reliance on external supply.
4. Support innovation in the food and fibre sector through the adoption of diverse practices, business models and new technology.
5. Enhance participation, knowledge exchange, employment opportunities and financial viability across the food and fibre supply chain.

AFSA applauds the Government's process in developing this Strategy paper with a view to ensuring the future sustainability and viability of the Capital Food and Fibre community.

1. What is your vision for the future of food production in the ACT? How would you express it?

Our vision is to enable regenerative and agroecological farms to thrive. This has taken on an added salience in the face of the increasing impacts of the climate crisis and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Australians care more than ever about the way their food is produced and how and where they can access it, with a growing awareness of its social, environmental, and economic impacts.

Nutritious food produced locally in ethical and ecologically-sound ways is increasingly in demand, and governments must facilitate and encourage the emergence and viability of agroecology and regenerative agriculture embedded in localised food systems with short and often direct supply chains, thereby protecting the environment and human and animal health. Inextricable to this vision is the need to honestly and truthfully account for the land's needs.

As such, AFSA works to increase understanding of and appreciation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples connection to and care for Country, the imposed coloniality on Country, and decolonising efforts therefore are areas of our concern. We aim to put First Peoples knowledge first in best practice of healing Country and sustaining life.

Our vision for the ACT would be to see the majority of food grown and sourced locally and in ecologically-sound and socially-just ways by setting objectives to be delivered by underlying strategies with a specific percentage target by a specific date.

We agree with the Strategy paper's overall vision in line with food sovereignty ethics, that would see:

- *The ACT and Region's food and fibre production systems are innovative, sustainable diverse and resilient in a changing climate.*
- *Farming systems improve biodiversity conservation and maintain ecological health.*
- *The ACT and Region's community has improved access to local, healthy food produced by regional farmers, community groups or individuals and its members are more engaged and included in food and fibre production.*
- *ACT food and fibre farming and manufacturing enterprises are thriving, provide increased employment for the region and are strongly supported by Canberrans.*

2. What are the key elements of success we should capture in the vision?

AFSA would like to see development of a measurable target of ACT population's consumption of food grown within 150km by 2040.

This would include further developing the food and fibre communities, and supporting processing facilities both within the ACT itself and within surrounding NSW council areas that make up the Australian Capital Region.

Key Elements

- Performing a current assessment of food production, processing facilities and consumption.
- Identifying barriers and what needs to be done to overcome these barriers.
- Setting strategies and targets for increases in local food production and consumption.
- Monitoring the outcome of strategies by ongoing assessment.

3. Thinking of your preferred vision for food and fibre in the ACT and Region, are these the right goals?

AFSA agrees with the goals identified by the Capital Food and Fibre Strategy document.

4. Are there other key goals that the Strategy should include and why?

In line with the principles of food sovereignty we would like to see additional focus on:

- equitable access to food and food security for marginalised members of the community.

5. What would success for each goal look like?

1. Transition to ecologically sustainable food and fibre production supported by strong environmental stewardship to ensure our region has healthy soils, water and air.

- 100% of regional farmers having access to farmer-led agroecological farming education
- Ensure all areas under agriculture, aquaculture and forestry are managed sustainably by 2030, increasing the resilience of these production systems.¹

2. Build the drought and climate change resilience of the ACT farm sector by identifying and encouraging practices that best fit the region's conditions.

- The development of a plan with community consultation that outlines what these practices are and how they can be implemented.

3. Increase the capacity to produce food and fibre locally to shorten supply chains and reduce reliance on external supply.

- Identification of gaps in regional food production and processing.
- Growth in local suppliers and processing facilities to match these gaps.

4. Support innovation in the food and fibre sector through the adoption of diverse practices, business models and new technology.

- Development of a range of educational models available to farmers including case studies, examples, documentation of and sharing the innovation stories, on farm education and agroecological workshops led by farmers².

5. Enhance participation, knowledge exchange, employment opportunities and financial viability across the food and fibre supply chain.

- Community-wide education program through schools and community groups to promote knowledge of agroecology, local food production, processing and supply and consumption.

¹ CBD, Global Biodiversity Framework, Draft 1, Target 10.

² Reference Soils for Life activities as a model

- Development of a register of local food and fibre suppliers, processors and short supply chain members to enable the chain to work better at every step from growing through to eating.

6. How can the barriers for achieving these goals be Addressed?

We first need to identify the barriers specifically, however the following are our recommendations:

- By providing and funding knowledge exchange on agroecology for the food and fibre sector.
- By doing an ecology audit to determine appropriate food growing areas for different foods.
- By doing an audit on the current food and fibre production in the region and setting benchmarks and tracking change over the next 5, 10, 15 and 20 years.
- By ensuring lands are conserved and protected specifically for food and fibre production.
- By providing support to increase the number of small farm businesses.
- By legislating for 'local' food labelling across the supply chain.

Towards goal one

Transition to ecologically sustainable food and fibre production supported by strong environmental stewardship to ensure our region has healthy soils, water and air.

1. How can we best support the incorporation of First Nations land management and traditional farming expertise?

The First Nations Bushfood and Botanical Alliance Australia issued a Statement in 2019 asserting sovereignty over native foods and the right to participate in decision making:

As custodians of our Country, we must take a leadership role. We must be included in any development of our native plants and animals in the bushfood, botanical, agricultural and medicinal and therapeutic industries. We believe that our effective participation in the industry, its growth and development has the power to bring social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits for all. Our leadership, bringing our Knowledge systems and values, will make a strong contribution to food security and a sustainable future for country and people – as it has for generations before us.³

³ <https://www.fnbbaa.com.au/bushfood-symposium-statement-firstn>

AFSA therefore recommends that the ACT Government:

- Uphold the rights assured by the UNDRIP
- Support the First Nations Bushfood and Botanical Alliance Australia Statement⁴
- Learn from other jurisdictions e.g. Victorian Traditional Owner Native Foods and Botanical Strategy⁵ to develop an aligned strategy in the ACT.
- Enact legislation to ensure First Peoples' knowledge is acknowledged and compensated in the Bush Foods/Native Foods industry in line with the Nagoya Protocol⁶
- Self-determination for First Peoples to provide unfettered access to Country - starting with all public lands:
 - Embed First Peoples' food, land and fire management practices in all Indigenous Land Use Agreements and National Parks, above and beyond Native Title determinations
 - Increase funding and training opportunities for First Peoples rangers and custodians to care for Country
 - Conduct culturally appropriate consultation and include First Peoples' input in the development of land and water resource management and planning
- Self-determination for First Peoples to provide unfettered access to Country - increase access to private lands:
 - Support partnerships between First Peoples and private landholders to give access to Country for social, cultural and economic purposes. We support Canberra City Farm's recommendation to *Invite First Nations elders and custodians to co-create with settler people shared projects for Caring for Country and Caring for people.*
 - Enact legislation to compel landholders to 'Pay the Rent'⁷ directly to Indigenous led organisations in appropriate Country.
 - Indigenous Country names to be identified on Land Taxes (researching and documenting this will assist in this facilitation)
 - Introduce Yarns on Farms⁸ to support horizontal knowledge exchanges that promote shared understandings of Country and the history and ongoing impacts of

⁴ <https://www.fnbbaa.com.au/bushfood-symposium-statement-firstn>

⁵ <https://www.fvtoc.com.au/native-foods-and-botanicals>

⁶ <https://www.cbd.int/abs/>

⁷ <https://paytherent.net.au/>

⁸ https://ghcma.vic.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Yarns-on-Farms-DL-DRAFT_2016_FINAL.pdf

colonisation on Country and First Peoples, and current land use and management strategies by settlers and First Peoples.

- Provide funding for horizontal knowledge exchanges between Original Owners and farmers
- Provide funding for settler Australians to undertake First Peoples cultural education
- Institute an Indigenous Fire Management Policy within the Territory so that First Nations are working (in a paid or funded capacity) to assist with Fire and Land Management. We support Canberra City Farm's recommendation of *Support research into traditional First Nations fire management relevant to the ACT by funding CSIRO research into the application of such methods into ACT's current fire management methods.*
- Legislation to ensure First Peoples knowledge is acknowledged and funded in the Bush Foods/Native Foods industry. We support Canberra City Farm's recommendation of *Encourage/support traditional First Nations food growing techniques by local First Nations Canberrans through supporting research into such techniques and providing business support for First Nations Canberrans to establish food growing enterprises.*
- We support Canberra City Farm's recommendation following, on the proviso that First Nations People provide free and prior consent, are acknowledged and share in the benefits accrued through any sale of traditional foods or knowledges: *Provide education for the whole Canberra population about growing and using traditional First Nations foods, particularly through relevant CIT courses.*

2. How do you think we can best support a thriving urban agriculture sector that is founded on ecological sustainability and community wellbeing?

Many Australian farmers are already implementing agroecological principles, which include:

- maintenance of water, nutrient, carbon and energy flows within the farm;
- integration of crops and livestock;
- diversification of crops and livestock species; and
- a focus on interactions and productivity throughout the agricultural system, rather than a focus on individual species

However, presently there are economic, political, and cultural lock-ins that limit the ability of both rural and urban farmers to shift to agroecology.

- Systemic Knowledge lock in - formal education and information from agents and other rural service providers and media reinforce the dominant system
- Policy lock in - government policy and investment reinforces dominant system eg drought policy.
- Debt lock in - Farmers cannot miss repayments - can't take risks on system transformation. Banks adjust business interest rates according to "risk" which for them correlates with deviation from norm.
- Market lock in - Commodity markets or major contract buyers like supermarkets define what is produced e.g. grain finished meat / vegetables designed for storage/transport Consumer culture driving preferences and household demand for "cheap" food.⁹

Recommendations

- **Landscape rehydration** - Develop planning legislation, capacity building and provide financial resources for landholders to work to restore natural flows.
- **Ecological economics** - An economy that values and supports the diversity of life; and which internalises the true social and environmental costs of our food systems
 - Promote healthy farms through landscape rehydration and increased water (and carbon) storage in soil
 - Develop mechanisms to financially account for loss of soil, carbon, and water through industrialised food and agricultural systems by building this cost into food prices
 - We support Canberra City Farm's recommendation *Public education (via school programs, CIT courses, university research and relative community groups) of the nexus between healthy environment, healthy food and healthy people.*
- **Resilience** - Our food and farming systems must be flexible and adaptable; and able to cope with many different scenarios, including external shocks such extreme weather events and peak oil. This requires diversity of agro-ecosystems, farming sizes and systems, fauna and flora, and diets
 - Map all agricultural land, and protect it from mining and housing development
 - Identify and define 'Food Lands' and legislate that they must be used as such as they do in France

- We support Canberra City Farm's recommendation of *Security of long term tenure for farmers*
- We support Canberra City Farm's recommendation of *Set aside land specifically protected for long term food production*
- **Local, local, local** - Local food systems build communities and tread more lightly on the environment
 - Enable zoning for smaller, localised food production and associated processing and distribution infrastructure including on-farm and cooperative abattoirs for large and small animals. We support Canberra City Farm's recommendation of *Mobile Slaughter/Butchery resource, to bring more local meat production into retail distribution and to support sustainable ecological local production.*
- **Agroecological food production** - including education and capacity building, which requires an understanding and respect for natural limits; enhancing soil fertility, conserving water within the landscape, minimising synthetic inputs including fertilisers and pesticides, minimising waste and creating closed loop systems
 - Tax the use of chemicals
 - Reward non chemical use
 - Encourage biodiversity
 - Relax home grown sale regulations (e.g. via 'cottage industry' exemptions with guidelines)
 - Reduce regulatory burden appropriately for small scale producers
- **Diversity** - Of agro-ecosystems and food economies; of farming sizes and systems; of fauna and flora; of diets
 - Seed saving and maintain access to non proprietary, non GMO seeds
 - Revegetation
 - Landscape rehydration
- **Urban and peri-urban agriculture** - Support the farming and utilisation of urban land for food production; prioritise green belts at the edges of major cities for sustainable food production over other competing or conflicting uses
 - We support Canberra City Farm's Proposal of *Accessibility to land for food growing should be protected from other land uses (eg housing development)*

3. What is the role of government, producers and the broader community?

Role of Government

- An audit of local/regional food production and processing facilities.
- Ensure legislation effectively limits intensive food production not run on agroecological principles.
- Deregulation of limitations to sale of food and produce grown on private lands and public lands (Community Gardens etc).
- Ensure appropriate regulation of home based commercial kitchens (aka NSW legislation) so that food can be easily, cost effectively and safely produced in the home.
- Knowledge sharing to connect producers with supply chain (supermarkets, restaurants, consumers)
- Certification of 'local food' and certification of 'local and agroecological food' - simple system so as not to overburden producers.
- Mandatory local food labelling.
- Research into best agroecological methods and dissemination/training for producers. We support and promote participatory research projects to help us understand what is already working in agricultural communities, what is not, and what we can do differently.
- Tackle corporate control of the food system - legislate to reduce the supply chain.
- Increase support (research/funding/resources) for local and regional food economies
- Establish a supermarket ombudsman with strong enforcement powers as a first step to tackling the abuse of market power by the supermarket duopoly against suppliers and shoppers
- Simplify the system for urban growers and small farms selling direct to consumers. No licencing required for non hazardous foods.
- Set aside agricultural lands for food growing and set aside specific cooperative farming areas. We support Canberra City Farm's recommendation *to Provide legislative support to protect land for food growing through appropriate land use zones in the Territory plan, including vacant land within the urban area which could be used for food production particularly by community based organisations and cooperatives.*
- Provide assistance where required for local growers in the way of access to stock feed and water as drought relief.
- Funding of Agroecological and First People's Demonstration Farms.

- Interest free loans to establish new food production businesses.
- Education at Colleges and through CIT. We support Canberra City Farm's recommendation to *Provide funding for urban agriculture education programs in schools, CIT and support for private providers*

Role of Producers

- To work in an agroecological way: "Agroecology is a scientifically and experientially justified practice of agriculture that is sensitive to the ecosystems in which it is situated and that fosters the democratic participation of all peoples in the food system. Its original and still predominant practitioners are Indigenous Peoples and peasant smallholders the world over. Many of its advocates make a strong case for relying on Indigenous knowledges of their land and systems to produce sufficient food sustainably. Agroecology fundamentally aims to promote the deep ecological, social, and economic knowledge of First Peoples, peasants, and other small-scale food producers and custodians of Land. It puts decision-making power back in the hands of Indigenous Peoples and peasants and local communities." We support Canberra City Farm's recommendation *educate themselves to ensure their food growing techniques are ecologically sustainable in our local environment*
- Prioritise local supply. We support Canberra City Farm's recommendation *first priority on providing food for the local community rather than export*
- Care for Country - educate themselves about First Peoples approach and 'custodial ethic' We support Canberra City Farm's recommendation *Producers as stewards of local soil and food production ecosystems*
- Discourage the use of synthetic chemicals in farming by increasing taxes on them, or providing subsidies to those who do not use them.
- Identify produce as local and/or local and agroecologically produced.
- Funding farmers to participate in agroecological learning/workshops.
- Fund a locally hosted (RDA?) database of local food producers, processors, distributors, retailers so that the system is easy for people to access across the shorter supply chain.

Role of Broader Community

Distribution Chain

- Processors (value added chain) to identify and prioritise local food.
- Supermarkets to identify and prioritise local food.

- Farmers markets to prioritise and clearly identify local producers, to surcharge or disallow interstate and out of region producers.
- Restaurants/Cafes to prioritise local producers.

Eaters

- Choose products with less packaging
- Buy 'Capital Region' local food.
- Eat seasonally.
- Ask for information of how your food is grown.
- Attend First Peoples knowledge and food preparation/cooking courses.
- Support local producers - We support Canberra City Farm's recommendation *support local food producers and suppliers through buying via box schemes, local markets and local shops which sell locally produced food and related products*. We propose adding 'community-supported agriculture' as a model system for deep connection and risk sharing between farmers and eaters.
- Refuse imports - adapt your diet.

4. What key actions can farmers take to increase the ecological health of our agricultural land?

- Learn about agroecological methods of farming.
- Keep water in the landscape.
- No till.
- Maintain 100% ground cover.
- Reduce or eliminate use of synthetic chemicals.
- Reduce intensive livestock farming by moving to pasture based integrated systems.
- These support Canberra City Farm's recommendations of *Use regenerative techniques to improve soil biological health and eventually eliminate the use of soluble salt fertilisers and minimise or eliminate the use of pesticides*.
- Determine the different ecological areas suitable for different types of food growing and don't try and force the farming of unsuitable products. This also supports Canberra City Farm's recommendation of *Farm within the constraints of the local environment (climate and landscape)*.

- Stay educated about new farming practices and innovations. This supports Canberra City Farm's recommendation of *Keep informed about regenerative farming techniques. Research into these techniques is rapidly developing. Farmers need to keep themselves informed about these developments and be prepared to rapidly adapt to new knowledge.*

5. What practices do we need to change, or reconsider?

- Need to set aside dedicated food growing areas 'Food Lands' We support Canberra City Farm's recommendation *Zoning laws must recognise that land for food production is a vital asset requiring protection from other land uses whether it is located within the urban area or outside the urban area.*
- Need to reduce synthetic chemical use - pesticides, herbicides, fertilisers and anti-microbials.
- Need to deregulate the use of public lands (e.g. Community Gardens) for the growing of food for sale.
- Need to use land appropriately.
- Need to source locally where available We support Canberra City Farm's recommendation *Circular local economies to bring nutrients back into local soils and ecosystems*
- Need to incentivise agroecological farming - we need to be restoring soil, water and air health for the health of our food. We support Canberra City Farm's recommendation *Farming land must have long term tenure as developing ecologically sustainable food production is a long term process.*

6. Which ones should we promote?

All of the above

7. What are important considerations for urban agriculture to ensure it supports ecological health?

- Ideally concentrate on organic or chemical free models, ensuring biodiversity and support of pollination species.

Towards goal two

Build the drought and climate change resilience of the ACT farm sector by identifying and encouraging practices that best fit the region's conditions.

1. What are your top concerns for future droughts?

- Water availability across the landscape including for food production.
- Increased risk of fire due to lack of moisture and dry fields.
- Soil loss due to lack of soil cover.
- Fire

2. What direct or indirect actions that can build drought resiliency can be taken that suit our region?

- Building better soils with higher organic content. to help hold moisture.
- Better water storage - in our landscapes, water is better stored in the soil for crop production. It should also be given priority for animal drinking water and research into best appropriate storage methods undertaken. We support Canberra City Farm's recommendations *Ensure water for food production is given one of the highest priorities during drought. And Encouraging water efficient farming techniques, for example,*
 - *increasing the carbon content of farming soil to maximise the ability of soil to hold water*
 - *slowing water flow across the landscape during rainfall events to maximise water infiltration into the soil and the recharging of aquifers*
- Use of trees to cool our landscape.
- Use of perennials and First Peoples plants in landscapes and food production to decrease the need for cultivation.
- Food waste/circular economy to help return organic matter to the soils.
- We also support Canberra City Farm's recommendation that this goes beyond just drought resiliency and is a wider food security issue: *As well as drought resiliency include resilience in the face of other potential crises including regional fires, and global supply chain disruption,*

such as: the next pandemic, next GFC, the next “Nine-Eleven” or other global disruption triggered by terrorism, conflict, trade embargo. Global IT systems are vulnerable to cyber attack and/or server failure. Australia has extremely tight fuel reserves for transport, and if world shipping and ports get clogged again as by COVID19, supply of imported fuel, food and agricultural materials will be severely threatened.

3. What are the costs/benefits of those actions?

- There are significant costs to farmers/landholders and they are typically not acknowledged - this needs to be included in the cost of food. There needs to be some benefit provided to farmers to do this work, or funded by penalisation of those that don't.
- The benefits are not only include drought resilience but food system sustainability, climate change mitigation and better food sovereignty by encouraging local and agroecological food and fibre farming.

4. Are there barriers preventing them to be taken up right now?

- Yes, farmers are not paid to look after their land, they are conventionally paid to just try and produce more from less and prices are pushed down (or they are competing with low prices forced by the duopoly supermarket system). This system needs a rethink, we need to be paying farmers for the real ecological cost of food.

5. How could the ACT Government support you to build resilience?

- Farmer to farmer knowledge sharing to help farmers build resilience.
- Research into the most appropriate perennial and Indigenous food plants and cover crop grasses that require less water but will keep soil covers.

6. What opportunities are there for carbon sequestration and net zero emissions farming and innovation that also increase drought resiliency?

- Agroecology

- Non intensive farming methods - much of the contribution to emissions is from industrial farming. Small-scale agroecological farmers do not sit in this same boat, they are contributing positively to carbon sequestration.
- Net zero emissions - we need to think outside farming and look at the benefits of a resilient local food system that does not require massive amounts of fuel to store and transport food.
- Innovative models for distribution and supply of food to shorten and decentralise supply chains, and reconnect producers and consumers - see information attached from Australian Capital Region Food Hub - we need local food boxes, Community Supported Agriculture, Farmers Markets and ability for local retailers to identify and source local produce. Other examples include community gardens, food hubs, on-farm sales and farmgate stalls in both an urban and rural context.
- Remove unrealistic food standards from contracts between producers and retailers (e.g large supermarkets).
- Implement legislation prohibiting food and organic matter to be disposed in landfill.
- Implementation of community-led and local circular economies e.g. community composting, FOGO collections in all areas.
- Consumer education e.g. food storage, best before vs use by dates, seasonality etc
- Food packaging regulations - eliminate single use packaging

Towards goal three

Increase the capacity to produce food and fibre locally to shorten supply chains and reduce reliance on external supply.

1. What needs to happen to allow the ACT and Region's food and fibre industries continue to grow?

- To get an updated assessment (audit) of what is produced, processes and consumed in the Region.
- In 2013/2014 significant work was done by a group of community organisations in the ACT region along with RDA Southern Inland to look into the barriers and steps necessary to improve local food production and consumption under the banners of Local Food Initiative research and Australian Capital Region Food Hub. This was developed as a collaborative exercise between RDA Southern Inland, Urban Agriculture Australia, Southern Harvest,

Canberra City Farm, Permaculture Exchange, FuturePLANS (Palerang Local Action Network) and See-Change Canberra.

- The information from this is attached, but in summary is as follows:

The results overwhelmingly identified that producers want to sell locally and consumers want to purchase locally produced food; however there are severe failings within the supply chain.

Distributors (retailers, restaurants, etc) said they don't know where to find local food and commented on inconsistent supply. Consumers didn't know where to purchase local food, liked to purchase "out of season" and perceived local food to be too expensive. Detailed results can be found in Food Hub #1 and Food Hub #2 Presentation Slides from RDA Southern Inland (also attached).

Summary of findings

- Producers Barriers The top 3 barriers to supplying for local consumption are:
 - a. Not enough production (64%)
 - b. Red tape (council, food authority etc) (32%)
 - c. Processing for product not available locally (14%)
- Producers Supply weekly or seasonally Preferred distribution is:
 - a. Local retail shop (41%)
 - b. Local Farmers Market (38%)
 - c. Central delivery for a box scheme (27%)
- Producers The Way Forward Assistance asked for:
 - a. Being part of a regional producers group (67%)
 - b. Establishing contacts with local retailers and consumers (67%)
 - c. Being part of a region-based marketing brand (60%)
- Consumers Top 3 barriers to purchasing local food:
 - a. Difficult to find (69%)
 - b. I like to buy some food out of season (35%)
 - c. Too expensive (34%)
- Consumers Challenges:

- a. Difficulty finding and identifying local food 'It's not on the label' and 'I do not know'.
- Consumers Shopping preferences are:
 - a. Purchases at existing retail outlets (79%)
 - b. Local Farmers Markets (71%)
 - c. A 'choose your own' box scheme (41%)
- Consumers Solutions
 - a. Information – database with links to producers
 - b. Access – more local produce in local stores, local farmers market, box schemes
 - c. Branding – identification and labelling
- Distributors Limitations to purchasing locally include:
 - a. Difficult to find in all food categories (50%)
 - b. Supply too inconsistent (25%)
 - c. Don't know where to purchase it (13%)
- Distributors Challenges
 - a. Would like to stock more local food but it is difficult to find Solutions
 - b. On-line web-based database of producers
 - c. Establish Business to Business (B2B) network for producers and retailers
 - d. Regional branding
- Farmer's Markets Issues
 - a. Access for Regional Producers
 - b. Identification of Regional Produce
- **Key findings:**
 - a. Regional brand and producers network
 - b. Database of regional producers accessible by consumers and retailers
 - c. Database of regional retailers accessible by consumers and producers
 - d. Regional Produce Farmers Markets

e. Box schemes

Whilst this information is still relevant, it needs updating. An assessment of current barriers to the market for producers, consumers and supply chain members should be performed.

This should support:

- Better access for producers at local farmers markets (this is currently not easy for small local startups, and they can't grow into viable businesses without access to markets for trial, incubation etc)
- Identification of opportunities of products not currently grown regionally.
- Support for growers to find and trial new and more products.
- Demonstration farms, incubators, producer groups, cooperative groups and knowledge sharing. We agree with Canberra City Farm's recommendations that *Food and fibre farmers need both business and educational support to increase the likelihood of creating successful businesses.*
- Business help and low interest loans for small farm start ups (operations, marketing and finance). We agree with Canberra City Farm's recommendation to *Create incentives for urban agriculture:*
 - *Adapt tenancy law to ensure tenants are entitled to convert at least parts of a rented garden to production gardening (the Greens mentioned this in last Election campaign);*
 - *Rates concessions for property owners who do the same, especially owners of rental properties (landlords).*
- Local processing and storage facilities (abattoirs/butchers/cold storage)
- Map prime agricultural land, and protect it from mining and urban sprawl We agree with Canberra City Farm's recommendations that
 - *Land for food and fibre production needs to be protected by appropriate Territory Plan zoning rules from being crowded out or used for other purposes.*
 - *Land for food and fibre production needs to be given high priority for water in times of severe droughts.*
 - *To ensure soil improvement methods, such as carbon sequestration and increasing soil microbiological diversity and health, which ensure ecologically sustainable production can be maintained, land for food and fibre production requires long tenure periods.*

- Government culture and policy must enable and encourage urban agriculture and community food initiatives
- Community Land Trusts for food - Farmland and community land trusts can be used to preserve agricultural land into the future, preventing development for other purposes that might threaten community and national food security and local food sovereignty. A farmland trust is a 'private, non-profit organisation that preserves farms' and arable land.¹⁰ Farmland trusts are registered legal entities, which may or may not have charitable status, depending on the jurisdiction in which they are incorporated. They also vary in scale, with some operating at local level, others regionally or nationally. Typically the ownership structure of smaller-scale farmland trusts provides for a wide degree of community participation.
- Food-sensitive planning and urban design (FSPUD)¹¹ which recognises that access to healthy, sustainable and equitable food is an essential part of achieving liveable communities. ... FSPUD builds on the healthy environment focus pioneered by the Heart Foundation over the past 15 years. FSPUD Principles are:
 1. Support secure and equitable access to the Food necessary for a healthy and fulfilling life.
 2. Make healthy and sustainable Food choices easy and convenient choices.
 3. Encourage use of spaces and places to meet many diverse needs, reconciling Food production and exchange with housing, enjoyment of open spaces and recreational areas, urban cooling, skills and jobs, socialising and community celebration.
 4. Provide opportunities for those who wish to participate in growing, exchanging, cooking and sharing Food.
 5. Identify and invest in the safe use and re-use of urban resources (soil, water, nutrients, 'waste') that can support viable and sustainable Food production. This also supports Canberra City Farm's recommendation of *Integrate design and creative industries with local food, fibre and closed loop waste reusing systems*

¹⁰ From A Review of Farmland Trusts: A Review of Farmland Trusts: Communities Supporting Farmland, Farming and Farmers, Land Conservancy of British Columbia, p7.

¹¹

6. Protect and / or enhance urban and surrounding ecosystems and increase biodiversity (including, but not limited to, bees, open-pollinating fruit trees, native vegetation).
7. Ensure decisions reflect the long-term value and broader community benefits of access to productive land and experienced producers.
8. Encourage investment and innovation, through secure tenure and supportive operating environments for both community and commercial Food enterprises.
9. Increase resilience, by designing to keep options open for future use of space and resources.
10. Acknowledge and support diversity and sovereignty (the right to have informed choices) over what, how and where people produce and eat Food.

2. What do you think should be the role of government to promote more local food and fibre production and manufacture?

- We need an audit of food and agriculture production and separately supply into ACT and surrounds by the major food groups to determine
 - a) what we do not produce but are accessing from supplies elsewhere
 - b) what we do not produce, but is produced elsewhere in Australia, but we are accessing supplies from elsewhere
 - c) what we do not produce but could produce and is being imported
 - d) what we do not and cannot produce.

This work has been somewhat done by the Australian Capital Food Hub (see attached) and could be further developed from there.

- Recognition of local throughout - per above, the need for definition and branding of local
- Provide low cost funding for year round food production trials and research (noting climate difficulties in supply in the region). Although, while it is commonly accepted that Canberra region has a 'short growing season', we agree with Southern Harvest Associations *suggestion that this perception emerges from a worldview that focuses on the conditions that enable large scale industrial production of narrow range of crops that are not native to the area.*

- Fund and otherwise support collaborative establishment of food processing (abattoirs, dairy, cold storage facilities) with the food community.
- Support producers to get through the legislative process. Support to get their businesses viable. We agree with Canberra City Farm's recommendations to
 - *provide educational support for food and fibre farmers through CIT and Canberra University and also supporting and enabling mentoring support for new farmers by experienced producers*
 - *provide financial support through grants, loans and other means, especially for new farmers and in periods of extreme drought*
 - *integrate agri-tourism into an ACT tourism plan*
 - *integrate creative industries with zero waste circular local economies*

3. What are the opportunities for agri-tourism in the ACT?

- The potential for agri-tourism in the ACT and surrounds (from which the ACT will still benefit via overnight stays and day visitation) is large as already evidenced by the successful local wine trails.
- These should be integrated with other councils in the wider Australian Capital Region to create larger food trails. In order for the region to take advantage of the agri-tourism benefits, the ACT Government needs to work with surrounding NSW Councils in order to ensure that activities such as those outlined below are allowed without a development application:
 - On farm tours
 - Farm-gate sales
 - Education - interstate and overseas visitors, university groups
 - Food festivals
 - School educational visits
 - Degustation events
 - Work experience/volunteering. We support Canberra City Farm's assertion *For the less wealthy, there is also an opportunity to market the agricultural experience to backpackers and those wishing to have rural experience through working on local farms.*

4. Should we foster commercial opportunities for community- based enterprises to help increase access and success for new businesses?

- Yes, one of the best ways to grow food production is to give people the chance to learn the skills for potential new enterprises through community based organisations. A successful model for growing regional farmers can readily be seen in the Southern Harvest organisation which allows for a Community Stall at their Bungendore Farmers Market and small produce allocations to their Multi-Farm Produce boxes, there has been huge growth both in terms of numbers of producers and supply, as well as local demand. We support Canberra City Farms suggestion that *Community-based enterprises provide an opportunity for potential new enterprises to learn and experiment with business ideas at lower risk of failure than a new start up, particularly if the community-based enterprise can provide business mentors for potential new businesses.* And we do believe it is pertinent to *Create spaces for facilitating more connection between Canberrans and community based businesses*
- Also see above regarding low cost loans or community development opportunities for year round food production as well as processing facilities.
- The expansion of the Canberra City Farm concept to incorporate larger acreage and more enterprise and incubation development.

Towards goal four

Support innovation in the food and fibre sector through the adoption of diverse practices, business models and new technology. Innovation has always been an integral part of agriculture. Agritech is a rapidly growing opportunity in rural and urban areas

1. How do we encourage the adoption of new technologies and innovations, particularly those that diversify agricultural production and ensure it is sustainable across the landscape?

- AFSA supports innovation particularly through farmer-to-farmer knowledge sharing to develop and share new models, ideas and designs
- AFSA supports the suggestions of further research and development into:
 - agrivoltaics, the growing of crops or farm animals under renewable energy infrastructure such as solar panels

- We propose to amend Canberra City Farm’s recommendation to *Provide support for organisations such as Regional Development Australia to organise conferences, webinars etc to expose potential business to new ideas, technologies and innovation* - to instead focus on organising conferences or field days led by agroecological farmers sharing knowledge in a horizontal pedagogical model such as those already led by Soils for Life and Local Land Services in the Braidwood area.
- Planning reform to protect peri-urban areas for sustainable food production:
- Prevent the rezoning of land for housing development
- Prioritise green belts for sustainable food production over other competing or conflicting uses.
- Place a moratorium on the sale of agricultural land for development into urban sprawl and housing development
- Map arable land and regulate for its utilisation and production e.g. Prevent the repurposing of peri-urban land from horticulture and livestock to turf farming and ‘cash crops’ for export
- Government should adopt and implement the Heart Foundation’s Food Sensitive Planning and Urban Design (FSPUD) principles
- Value chain infrastructure in Capital region. The “need to support vital industries such as abattoirs, grain mills, and processing facilities such as on-farm and cooperative-managed boning rooms. Planning regulations should also support mobile infrastructures, which in turn will improve direct sales of produce to communities (Community-Supported Agriculture). The lack of access to abattoirs impacts not just animal welfare, but also prohibits new farming ventures from getting started in the first place. Large industrial abattoirs with a focus on export are increasingly moving away from accepting small private kills. Where farmers lose opportunities to process and distribute their produce, it becomes increasingly difficult to provide local food to rural and regional communities”¹²
- Support Open Food Network¹³ and other open-source platforms to create online marketplaces for small-scale food producers, to connect producers and eaters without relying on the duopoly - Woolworths and Coles e.g. Open Road program currently piloted in Victoria¹⁴
- Urban and peri-urban agriculture - Support the farming and utilisation of urban, open and underutilised spaces.

¹² Tammi Jonas, AFSA

¹³ <https://openfoodnetwork.org.au/>

¹⁴ <https://about.openfoodnetwork.org.au/open-road/>

- Examples include permaculture principles of small-scale intensive growing such as integrating gardens into building designs.
- We support Canberra City Farm's recommendation that this should be done via *Providing financial support such as low interest loans or grants to facilitate setting up innovative businesses and the purchase of new technology to minimise the risk of failure in the early stages of the business.*

Towards goal five

Enhance participation, knowledge exchange and employment opportunities across the food and fibre supply chain

1. How do we enable younger generations and people from diverse cultural backgrounds to gain the skills and experience to generate new agricultural enterprises in the ACT?

- Rising agricultural land prices is an extreme barrier to entry for young farmers. This has seen the rise of land-sharing platforms, such as AFSA's FOOPL (Farming on other peoples land).¹⁵
- Industrial and large scale food production, and the shutting down and consolidation of processing facilities, such as abattoirs and mills has led to a depopulation of rural areas and harvest labour shortages, promoting the regrowth of small scale agroecological farms and community based processing systems will help reverse this flow.

Some solutions include the following and can also be drawn from the Australian Capital Region Food Hub information:

- On-farm internships or educational programs. This matches the Canberra City Farm's recommendations of *Provide business coaching for farming start ups and Provide support to enable experienced farmers to mentor new entrants to farming*
- Producer groups
- Regional food branding

¹⁵ <https://afsa.org.au/farming-on-other-peoples-land/>

- Identification through research of market gaps
- Integrate farm planning, operations and business management into the college system and CIT education
- Provide business education and incubator support. We agree with Canberra City Farm's proposal to *Provide initial financial support for farming start ups and Provide both business and farming education programs through CIT to maximise the likelihood of success for new farmers as well as Provide introductory business and farming training to students within the ACT Secondary College system.* This suggestion aligns well with the French model of agricultural land protection in which one must have completed agricultural education in order to be able to purchase and work on designated agricultural lands. Refer to Victoria's VCE Food Studies Units.

2. How can we encourage cross-cultural knowledge exchange and connection through local food?

- Food days/events
- Promotion of cultural food events by community organisations
- Farm tours/experiences We support Canberra City Farm's proposals of *Community building through support of food events (eg multicultural festival) and Provide support for agri-tourism businesses and Support community allotment gardening organisations to provide space and support for migrants and refugees and first nations people..*

3. In what ways if any can urban agriculture contribute to community wellbeing?

Urban agriculture can contribute to community wellbeing via:

- Reduction in pollution from growing locally and not transporting (more green spaces)
- Community connectedness through food for example Cultivating Community
- Community connectedness through educational opportunities
- Cooking together and sharing food, particularly when involved with smaller urban groups is a great way to promote resilience and community feeling.
- Improved childrens health (and adult health) through eating locally sourced, chemical free seasonal food.

- Connecting through gardening, involving school children, aged care facilities and other community groups in tours and hands on involvement in urban agriculture examples (For example this is done in SAGE (Sustainable Agriculture Eurobodalla) in NSW where raised garden beds are tended to by disability garden groups.)