



AUSTRALIAN FOOD SOVEREIGNTY ALLIANCE

Submission on the agritourism and small-scale agriculture development: Proposed amendments to support farm businesses and regional economies

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Prepared by

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About the Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance (AFSA)

The Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance (AFSA) is a farmer-led civil society organization, made up of organisations and individuals working together towards a food system in which people can create, manage, and choose their food and agriculture systems. AFSA is an independent organisation not aligned with any political party. We have around 700 farmer, individual, and organisational members.

AFSA provides a balanced voice to represent farmers. We connect small- and medium-scale Australian farmers for farmer-to-farmer knowledge sharing, work with all levels of government for scale-appropriate and consistent regulations and standards for agriculture, and advocate for fair pricing for those selling to the domestic market.

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 work regularly with Slow Food International and many of its Australian chapters. We also support the Australasian representative on the Civil Society Mechanism (CSM), which relates to the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS).

Our vision is to enable regenerative and agroecological farming businesses to thrive. Australians care, now more than ever, about the way their food is produced, including its social and environmental impacts. Food produced on small- and medium-scale regenerative farms is increasingly in demand. Government is bound to heed changing community expectations and facilitate the growth and viability of regenerative agriculture, which will thereby protect the environment, human and animal health.

As a key stakeholder and representative body of small- and medium-scale producers Australia-wide and within NSW, AFSA welcomes the opportunity to submit on the proposed planning legislation amendments for agritourism and small-scale agriculture development, to support farm businesses and regional economies.

Overview

AFSA welcomes the opportunity provided by NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) to provide a submission in response to the proposed amendments to support farm businesses and regional economies. AFSA supports the need to create an enabling policy environment to enhance resilience and support economic recovery post COVID-19, the Black Summer bushfires, and undoubtedly the most recent floods in March 2021.

Overall, **AFSA supports the proposed changes outlined in the 'Explanation of Intended Effect' (EIE)** as they support sale of produce direct from farmers to consumers, shorter supply chains with on-farm processing and diversified on-farm economic activities. However, AFSA would not wish for these planning amendments to remove the need for ongoing policy, regulatory and economic support for primary production in NSW.

Of the 10 areas of proposed changes, those in relation to 'farm gate activities', 'farm events', 'small-scale processing plants' and 'biosecurity for poultry farms and pig farms' are most pertinent to AFSA members who are small-scale farmers, as well as processors and retailers, due to the nature of short supply chains and localised economies. We have outlined our position and areas of concern, in relation to these proposed changes.

Farm gate activities

AFSA **supports the proposed definition for farm gate activities**¹ including the focus on selling produce grown on the farm, or the surrounding area. AFSA believes the definition could be strengthened by including greater detail on 'the surrounding area' and outlining how this would be monitored.

AFSA supports the specified standards of a roadside stall that constitutes exempt development. However, AFSA would encourage the standards include the ability for a **greater number of guests**, than 50 at any one time on the property.

Farm events

AFSA **supports the broad definition of farm events**² as it provides opportunities for diverse economic and educational activities on-farm.

There are a number of **specifications for the 'exempt' development criteria of which we have concerns** including:

¹ "a. the processing, packaging and sale of agricultural produce; b. a restaurant or café; c. facilities for the holding of tastings, workshops or providing information or education to visitors, for agricultural produce grown on the farm or predominantly grown in the surrounding area."

² "permit events, tours, functions, conferences, fruit picking, horse riding and other similar experiences on land for which the principal use of the land is the production of agricultural goods for commercial purposes."

- not allowing the manufacturing of food or drink;
- low guest number limits (30 guests, for 52 events per year, and 50 guests for 10 events per year);
- the distance of 1,000m from the nearest existing dwelling house, for events that have amplified music or voices.

To address these concerns AFSA recommends:

- Reviewing the broader regulatory context, not limited to, traffic and parking control, waste management, and on-site food production, to ensure farmers can conduct farm events utilising their own produce and with higher guest numbers;
- A greater focus on limiting the event hours (which are currently quite generous), rather than focusing on distance to mitigate the impacts of noise. The current distances specified would negatively impact small-holder farmers;
- Greater guest number limits, especially for events on up to 10 event days per year.

AFSA has **concerns regarding the setbacks of 1,000m for pig and poultry farms**, as specified within the areas of ‘farm events’, ‘farm gate activities’ and ‘farm stay accommodation’. This is due to the nature of pastured poultry and pig production, which is conducted on a significantly smaller scale and in a free-range nature. Therefore, AFSA proposes a separate, lower setback, for pastured poultry and pig production.

Small-scale processing plants

AFSA **welcomes the proposed amendments to allow the establishment of small-scale processing plants** for meat, dairy and honey. The proposed throughput per annum limits are more than adequate for the scale of production and processing of our members. However, we note there is a **limit of “no more than one per property”** and would welcome greater detail, as to not prevent the opportunities for agricultural and livestock processing industries on diversified farms.

AFSA has concerns relating to the locational criteria for complying development. Firstly, **regarding the 500m setback to the nearest existing dwelling house**, as this would negatively impact on members who are farming on a smaller scale. We would **recommend a setback of 200m**, which would align with the EPA restrictions in Victoria. Secondly, the **setback of 5km from a residential zone is too great**, especially due to the lower risks and negative impacts of processing on the scale of the throughputs listed above. We would **propose a setback of 1km from a residential zone**.

Biosecurity for poultry farms and pig farms

AFSA **welcomes the proposed changes to update development standards** to align with separation distances required under biosecurity standards, as they align with the reduced biosecurity risks of small-scale livestock production. However, we do believe the poultry limits are generous, and would welcome a proposed limit of approximately 6,000 birds.

AFSA appreciates the opportunity to submit on the proposed planning amendments for agritourism and small-scale agriculture development. We look forward to further meaningful, collaborative consultation on the matters we have raised above.

About Food Sovereignty

“Food sovereignty asserts the right of peoples to nourishing and culturally-appropriate food produced and distributed in ecologically-sound and ethical ways, and their right to collectively determine their own food and agriculture systems.”³

The core of food sovereignty lies in the following principles:

- Food is a human need and a basic right, rather than a commodity.
- Food systems should be democratically constructed, responding to diverse social, cultural and environmental conditions.
- Food systems should be based on a strong commitment to social justice: for farmers, food system workers, and the most vulnerable members of our society who experience food insecurity.
- Resilient food systems require long-term environmental sustainability, transitioning away from dependence on fossil fuels and chemical inputs.
- Resilient and sustainable food systems will be more localised and regionalised.
- Trade in food and agricultural products can enhance economic and social well-being but should be conducted on the basis of international solidarity, respecting and not undermining the food sovereignty ambitions of other peoples and countries.⁴

³ The Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance, <<https://afsa.org.au/?s=food+sovereignty+>>.

⁴ Patel, R. (2009). What does food sovereignty look like? *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 36(3), 663-671.