

Future of Agriculture in Nillumbik

Action Plan



Introduction

Nillumbik is one of Victoria's 12 green wedges around metropolitan Melbourne with 91 per cent of the Shire classified as green wedge. Its productivity is important to the Shire's economy and Council will encourage projects that fit with the values of the community to improve the economy and create local employment.

Economic opportunities for the green wedge exist in agribusiness, tourism, recreation and sustainability including renewable energy. Council will encourage innovation in sustainable and regenerative agriculture. The Nillumbik Green Wedge Management Plan 2019 provides a framework for its future management and pursuit of environmentally sustainable economic outcomes while respecting conservation values.

Through the findings derived from the Future in Nillumbik Research Project, Council has developed a realistic and achievable action plan with the key objectives being to retain, sustain and improve the future of agriculture in Nillumbik, taking into consideration planning policy, geographic, environmental, economic and social trends and demands.

These actions also sit firmly in line with Objective three from the Nillumbik Economic Development Strategy 2020 -2030.

Objective 3: Facilitate economically and environmentally sustainable use of and with the Shire's green wedge.

- Investigate how Nillumbik can facilitate an environment for a strong and diverse collective of start-ups and businesses that will form the basis of a green economy
- Research, develop and pilot projects to increase sustainability as part of a green economy
- Explore and facilitate agribusiness opportunities.

Action Plan

Objectives	Actions
1. Protect, promote and support sustainable, regenerative agriculture and local food systems in the Shire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase or utilise existing Council resources in the Environment and Economic Development teams to drive Agriculture and Food Systems projects, workshop programs, demonstration sites and other associated initiatives in line with agricultural and economic development and education. • Develop demonstration sites on public and private land for best practice regenerative farming practice. • Investigate the potential of urban farming in activity centres to support greater food security and climate resilience and to raise awareness in the community. • Expand on the Open Farm Day program. • Enhance the current Land Management Incentive program with a commercial farming component targeting the development of innovative, environmentally responsible farming systems.
2. Investigate and advocate for positive policy relating to diverse, innovative farming systems that foster ecological responsible economic development, local employment, circular resource use and local food systems and security;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inventory current waste resources generated in the Shire with potential for use in agriculture, such as green waste, organics and waste water. • Advocate for greater eco-market opportunities to support the retention and enhancement of biodiversity assets and soil carbon sequestration on private land. • Consider collaborative integrated pest management programs to manage pest plant and animals in the Shire in a coordinated and targeted approach. Consider harvesting as a part of management, as well as biological solutions before chemical management. • Advocate for and support supplementary rural business activities, such as farm gate sales, farm stays and other low environmental amenity impact enterprises, that are consistent with green wedge values in line with the planning scheme and approved use

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a program to facilitate the leasing of land to young farmers as a way to activate the landscape, bring new entrants into the industry and create productive succession plans for retiring farmers.; • Development of cultural advice notes for crops modelled in this document; • A secondary investigation to build on the research report and delve further into selected models, such as multiple grape variety models, new climate adaptive varieties for pome fruit and varieties of citrus to find those best adapted to future agricultural use.
3. Include in clause 74-002 – Further strategic work to influence policy changes/direction in the planning scheme regarding sustainable, regenerative agriculture	
4. Advocate for expansion for array of food production and farm gate sales of produce.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for and support supplementary rural business activities, such as farm gate sales, farm stays and other low environmental amenity impact enterprises, that are consistent with green wedge values in line with the planning scheme and approved use
5. Advocate to State Government to alter planning controls to allow land holders a right to farm only on pre-cleared agricultural land in the RCZ ensuring decision guidelines to avoid damage to surrounding environment.	

6. Support the creation of a vibrant, connected local agricultural community through peer to peer networks, targeted education programs, market access innovation and active, open communication between Council and the agricultural community.

- Establish an agricultural advisory group to improve communication between Council and the local farming community.
- Investigate opportunities for scale appropriate market access models, such as food hubs, community supported agriculture, distribution networks, aggregators, farm gates, cooperatives etc.
- Deliver targeted integrated land management education programs for various sectors of the agricultural community, such as equine, viticulture, olives, cattle etc.
- Work with the 'Keep Yarra Ranges Fruit Fly Free' market access group to assist in developing regional fruit fly management programs.
- Establish an annual celebratory dinner for the local farming community showcasing local produce.
- Establish peer to peer training programs capitalizing on local and regional farming knowledge and innovative practices, such as permaculture, agroecology, biointensive vegetable production, integrated pest management, stacked enterprises and others important regenerative elements and models.
- Include an agricultural position on the Economic Development Advisory Committee
- Investigate opportunities to work with Melbourne Market (wholesale market), Melbourne's North Food Group and the Melbourne Innovation Centre Food Incubators.

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