

Portfolio/s: Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water

Canberra Region Local Food Strategy

Talking points:

- The Canberra Region Local Food Strategy (the Strategy) will guide future planning and management of our region's agriculture production.
- The ACT Government has invested \$200,000 in the 2024-25 ACT Budget for the first year of implementation of the Strategy.
- As a priority action under the first year of implementation, the ACT Government commissioned Natural Capital Economics to conduct a study on Food and Agriculture in the ACT. This study collected and analysed a wide range of production and consumption data on the ACT and local region's food system. The results of this study will inform actions under future implementation plans. A report of key findings will be publicly available by the end of the year.
- Procurement activities have commenced to conduct an ACT Food Hub feasibility study. The study will include an assessment of infrastructure requirements, potential locations, anticipated costs and governance models for management.
- A 12-month project is underway to identify and address policy, planning and regulatory barriers to support ACT farmers to adapt to drought. Removal of barriers to diversification would potentially enable landholders to explore alternative income sources such as farm tourism and value-added produce. This would also potentially enhance farm resilience to climate variability by diversifying income streams and reduce reliance on single commodities. This project is funded by the Australian Government Regional Drought Resilience Planning Program.
- The CRG is anticipated to reconvene at the beginning of next year to continue discussions and planning for the other projects funded in the 2024-25 ACT Budget. These include examining opportunities for using underutilised ACT Government land to support local food production and helping educate the community on how to grow food in the ACT.

Key Information

- The Canberra Region Local Food Strategy launched on 12 June 2024.
- The ACT Government continues to work with the CRG to identify priority actions to support the implementation of the Strategy. A meeting will occur in early 2025 to discuss ongoing projects and identify opportunities for the next iteration of the Strategy's implementation plan.

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Background Information

- The ACT has rural and urban agriculture production.
- There are approximately 160 rural farms which collectively manage 15 per cent of the ACT's land area. The majority operate in sheep, wool and cattle production, horse agistment and other equestrian activities. Other enterprises include eggs, fruit, vegetables, and wine.
- In urban areas there are numerous backyard gardens, a growing number of popular community gardens, and urban farms with vegetable or seedling production.
- There are also enterprises along the food supply chain. This includes farmers markets and direct sale businesses like those offering fresh food and produce boxes, and bakeries, breweries and restaurants that use local produce.
- Although the Strategy will be an ACT Government policy to set the strategic direction for the ACT, it is also intended to be used to facilitate connections and collaboration with the wider Canberra region. This is because, despite the existing agricultural enterprises, the ACT is highly reliant on food produced elsewhere and will continue to be for the foreseeable future.