

**Submission  
No 4**

## **FOOD PRODUCTION AND SUPPLY IN NSW**

**Organisation:** Ballina Shire Council

**Date Received:** 7 December 2021

enquiries refer

**Rob van Iersel**

in reply please quote

**21/105848 (CM 259-010)**



7 December 2021

The Chair  
Committee on Environment and Planning

Dear Sir

**Re: Food Production and Supply in NSW**

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission in relation to the enquiry into food production and supply in NSW. This submission has been prepared by Council staff based on both our corporate and planning policy frameworks and experience in the consideration and address of a wide variety of land use, community, and service and infrastructure delivery relating to rural land.

Ballina Shire Council commends the Committee on undertaking this inquiry. In the Australian context, it is easy to take access to healthy food for granted.

However, as our population grows and as the impacts of a warming planet accelerate, food security and equity of access to food will become increasingly important issues.

Ballina is a Shire of compact urban towns and villages in a wider rural setting.

Our agricultural sector continues to evolve – from a strong dairying background, through sugar cane and macadamia dominance, there is now a much more diverse range of crops, farmers and farms.

The Shire continues to experience rapid growth, which increases pressure on our rural/agricultural land.

The two key messages of our submission are:

**1. *The NSW Government must lead***

Achieving food security, and securing meaningful improvements in food production will require a strong, well-resourced Department of Agriculture.

**2. *Farming diversity must be prioritised***

Industrial-scale agriculture will remain important....but will largely look after itself

Smaller scale local farms, growing a diversity of produce, have an increasingly important role in feeding local people and in managing local land.

## 'Big picture'

*Appropriate* government intervention in the market is vital:

- Set a clear policy direction – consistent across the State
- Resource policies with appropriate and targeted funding
- Support value-adding supply chains
  - supplier networks, industrial land, start-up support and funding
- Joint marketing support (industry and region based), regional investment prospectus
- Agricultural research and extension
  - support regenerative agriculture (benefits to productivity improvement, reversing biodiversity decline and enhancing marketing opportunities)

Invest in the future:

- Create real links:
  - farmers – scientists / researchers – government/ private funding
  - strengthen linkages between value-adding and regional food tourism
  - with urban water recycling and urban waste management streams

Innovate:

- Learn from The Netherlands - See <https://www.ideatovalue.com/curi/nickskillicorn/2018/12/how-the-netherlands-has-innovated-agriculture-to-become-the-worlds-2-exporter-of-food/>

Plan for and facilitate diversity of scales and of crops/stock:

- Small local farms; local markets, diversity of food produced

Language shift within NSW planning system:

- From Agricultural Policies to **Food Policies**.

## 'Local Picture' – Ballina & Northern Rivers

Key Issues:

- Competition for land: residential – employment – biodiversity – farming
  - there is no unconstrained land left; therefore farming land continues to come under serious pressure to cater for urban uses
- Smaller sized properties
  - we do not have big farms – individual farmers need to do more with less; this impacts on the financial viability of local farms
- Rural lifestyle v farming
  - cashed-up 'tree changers' buying rural properties with no intention to farm
- High land value
- Fragmented land ownership
- Land use conflict

- Access to transport infrastructure for raw and value added products
- Rural tourism (non-agricultural activity such as weddings) potentially competing with agriculture (through land prices and land use conflict)

#### Food Production:

- Identify & protect 'good' farming land
  - need clear, well-accepted criteria for mapping 'good' farming land
  - consistent criteria across the region and across the State
  - mapping must be useful at the property scale
- Efficient production – need for an 'off-farm' production hub?
  - opportunities for combined waste management and waste-to-energy projects, also combined cold storage, transport and logistics, administration and industry support
- Urban farms
  - variety of scale – community gardens, edible public landscapes, local gardens in the verge, vertical gardens etc.
- Supplementary incomes – includes agritourism
  - where linked to agriculture, such as value-adding and cellar door and on-farm events
- Local sufficiency
  - encourage diversity of crops/stock produced to increase resilience and sustainability of the region, economically and environmentally.

#### Food supply:

- Farmers markets
- Mechanisms to compete with supermarkets
- Food waste
- Online supply chain network - linking growers with local retailers and/or customers

### Role of Local Government

#### The Planning System / Zoning:

- RU1 for all 'good farm land'?
  - needs to be reviewed but should be informed by more nuanced State Significant Agricultural Land (SSAL) mapping based on more than soil type.
- Recognise that zoning may protect farm land.....it cannot ensure farming is undertaken
- See "Improving the Prospects for Agriculture and Regional Australia in the NSW Planning System", NSW Agriculture Commissioner (See link [here](#))

#### Policy:

- Protect and promote farming as a priority

- Recognise the value of good environmental stewardship as part of farming and not necessarily prioritise production over environmental values (such as native vegetation or water quality or availability to the environment)

Other:

- Increase the differential for rating of rural residential properties (over a certain size and subject to SSAL mapping) as a disincentive for non-agricultural land use
- Investigate (or facilitate) alternative tenure arrangements

## What we need

Clear policy direction from State:

- There are strongly competing regional priorities – urban v biodiversity v farmland
- Regionally significant land in each of these categories must be identified and mapped at property scale
- Clear & agreed criteria for mapping 'good farming land' at Shire & property scale
- Local political support to maintain urban boundaries (i.e. clear acknowledgement that we will not 'intrude' into RU1 land)

If you have any enquiries in regard to this matter please contact Rob van Iersel, Strategic Planner, on [REDACTED] or by email [REDACTED]

Yours faithfully



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**Planning and Environmental Health Division**