



Agricultural Policy Stakeholder Engagement Report

September 2025



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Draft Agricultural Policy - September 2025

1. Introduction

In response to motions passed at the General Electors meetings held in 2024 and 2025 and a Council motion to develop an Agricultural Policy, the Shire initiated a series of engagement roundtables with agricultural stakeholders. These sessions aimed to gather insights, concerns, and aspirations from the agricultural community to inform the development of a strategic policy that supports a thriving and sustainable agriculture sector.

2. Executive Summary

The Shire of Augusta Margaret River is home to a diversity of highly productive agricultural enterprises, including livestock, dairy, viticulture and horticulture. Our producers vary in scale, with significant quantities of food and fibre exported across the state and the country, and even into international markets. Agriculture within the shire is a vitally important contributor to food security, livelihoods, and local identity. This primary production underpins additional value-add enterprises, including the Margaret River region's esteemed wine offering, and supports a food culture leveraged by the tourism industry.

While recognising that some ancillary uses can complement primary production, the Shire seeks to retain the primacy of agricultural land-use on agricultural lots, utilising the Local Planning Scheme, Local Planning Strategy and other planning mechanisms.

The Agricultural Roundtables were designed to seek input from key groups within the sector to guide the development of an Agricultural Policy. The Policy would not seek to replicate land use considerations contained within the Local Planning Scheme, Local Planning Strategy and other planning mechanisms, but rather address other concerns raised by the agricultural community related to economic development and social outcomes.

3. Process

The context of the engagement is described by the following schedule:



Key groups within the agricultural sector including Lower South West Growers Group, Lower Blackwood LCD, Margaret River Regional Producers Association, Margaret River Wine Association, Augusta Margaret River Clean Community Energy, Margaret River Agricultural Show Committee, Margaret River SHS Agriculture Department, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, (DPIRD), Edith Cowan University and WA Farmers, Dairy Section were invited to take part in four Agricultural Roundtables.

Each session focused on different aspects of agricultural policy development, including vision setting, identifying challenges, and proposing strategic objectives.

A summary of the roundtables is presented below.

4. Outputs

4.1 Agricultural Roundtable 1

The first session held on 21 October 2024 served as a conversation starter and set the scene to raise and talk through positive and challenging aspects of agriculture within the region. Participants discussed the strengths of the region, including its diverse and productive agriculture, attractive environment, and strong community engagement. A brainstorming session identified challenges predominantly relating to demographic changes, consolidation of farms / land subdivision, red tape, and lack of agricultural representation in decision-making.

Meeting outcome: The group agreed to hold a follow-up session (after hay cutting) to explore whether a policy or another mechanism would best give agriculture a stronger voice.

4.2 Agricultural Roundtable 2

Building on the first session, the second session on 2 December 2024 recapped the information gathered from the first roundtable and surfaced ideas on support and raising industry visibility. Discussions included understanding the pressures the agricultural sector face, impacts of Shire operations on the agricultural sector and focused on raising community awareness and the promotion of agriculture. Concerns were raised about media perception, regulatory pressures, and the need for better communication and support for the sector. The group also explored ideas to raise community awareness and improve the promotion of the agricultural industry.

Meeting outcome: Agreement for a follow-up chat in early 2025 to keep momentum.

4.3 Agricultural Roundtable 3

Held on 11 March 2025, the third session explored strategic objectives and guiding principles for the policy. Participants emphasised the need for protection from red tape, improved understanding by the Shire, and support for local markets. Suggestions included appointing an Agriculture Officer and enhancing visibility of agriculture in community events.

Meeting outcome: An early draft of a shared vision and clearer framing of 'protection' in both planning and productivity context.

4.4 Agricultural Roundtable 4

The final session on 5 August 2025 focused on refining the principles and next steps in the process. The participants reviewed the draft policy and provided feedback agreeing that the policy should be short, strategic and principle based. Key recommendations included formalising the Agriculture Reference Group, recognising the region's contribution to broader markets, and collaborating with neighbouring LGAs. Training pathways and promotional campaigns were also discussed.

Meeting outcome: Greater direction on the guiding principles of the policy and a request for an ongoing engagement mechanism such as an Agricultural Reference Group or regular outreach events.

5. Feedback

Participants across all sessions expressed appreciation for the engagement process and noted improved consideration of agriculture by the Shire. The roundtables were seen as valuable forums for building trust and collaboration, where dialogue was respectful even where issues were debated.

Please refer to Appendix C for participant feedback on versions of the draft policy.

Appendix A

Agricultural Roundtables combined notes



Agriculture consultation session

21 October 2024, 2-4pm, Mainbreak meeting room

Present:

Shire: Andrea Selvey, Saul Cresswell, Matt Cuthbert

LSWGG: Matt Neild, Brad Noakes

Dairy Council WA: Laura Stocker, Jacqui Biddulph

MR Ag Society: Bridget Tighe, Leanne Ablett, John Alferink

MRSHS: Heath Johnstone

The meeting was a conversation starter, and not thoroughly minuted. Below are brief notes capturing some of the key conversation points, and the results of the brainstorming session.

The Shire acknowledged the importance of agriculture to the region, still being the biggest employer (on an FTE basis) and still being the biggest contributor to economic value-add. The attendance of the group was also acknowledged, with previous consultations having contributed to positive outcomes for the agricultural sector such as incorporation of feedback into the new Local Planning Scheme (LPS2); implementation of budgets for "Lower Order Roads" to support reconstruction of less-travelled but important agricultural roads; funding applications for telecommunications infrastructure in the Scott River Region, etc.

The Shire also remarked on the importance of industry peak groups in aiding communication and in supporting their members through things such as grant applications. It was then put to the farming representatives what outcomes they hoped an agricultural policy would deliver, and to consider whether a policy would be the most effective mechanism for achieving this.

Brad Noakes spoke to the origin of the motion for an agricultural policy, which arose mostly from concerns around the Local Planning Scheme (LPS2). The sense was that the Scheme didn't adequately understand farming needs, and that subsequent consultation referred to various Shire policies (e.g. sustainability policies) that disproportionately benefited other priorities at the expense of agriculture. The hope was that an agricultural policy would elevate agricultural concerns to be considered with the same weight as environmental and other concerns. Brad confirmed that consultation with Shire Planners had resulted in improvements in the LPS2 that incorporated and resolved the major concerns of the farming sector.

The Shire led attendees through a brainstorming session to consider the many positive attributes of the shire as a farming region, with the hope that this might inform a future

shared vision for local agriculture. Below captures what was written on the whiteboard, grouped under themes.

POSITIVES:

Region

Margaret River provenance: environment, soils, clean, water, climate

Consistent

Attractive region – people want to live and travel here

Lifestyle

Agriculture show

Industry

Diverse

Productive

Supply of workers

Growing interest among kids, and opportunities for career in agriculture

Big employer

Economic contributor

Respect for the land / custodianship

Positive farming methods

Innovation and openness to best practice

Market

Affordable

Sustainable and nutritious

Food security

Engaged and interested community

Margaret River Senior High School's head of Agriculture, Heath Johnstone, spoke to the sharp rise in interest among youth in farming and the desire to have the school connect more with local farmers.

WA Dairy Council's Jacqui Biddulph gave an overview of the local importance of dairy and the leaps the sector is taking in sustainability. She spoke to how productive the dairy sector is compared with other regions, and the large volume of dairy this region produces.

Margaret River Agriculture Society shared the popularity of Pepper the calf among young people at the recent Agriculture Show, and the importance of supporting agriculture to be more visible and present at the show in the future via the return of key infrastructure.

Lower SW Growers Group mentioned the sustainable farming practices and adoption of cutting-edge technology and methods. They mentioned the attractiveness of the region in helping draw a workforce, and questioned how the Shire was accommodating housing options for these workers.

The Shire spoke to the flexibility within the Local Planning Strategy and Scheme to allow a diversity of housing options for agricultural lots, including an increased size allowance for ancillary dwellings from 70m² to 120m²; the removal of conditions requiring these ancillary dwellings to be co-located with the main dwelling; the ability for these agricultural lots to develop campgrounds / caravan parks; and the leeway to build 6-12 chalets to accommodate itinerant workers.

Comment was made that these options are not public knowledge, and more effort could be made to communicate this.

The group then brainstormed current and future challenges they saw for the region, captured below.

CHALLENGES:

Changing Contexts

Decline in number of farms

Consolidation of farms

Subdivision of agricultural land

Housing

Increasing populations

New demographics – city dwellers working from home and not contributing to the community

Working with the Shire

Red tape

Lack of agriculture officer or key contact at Shire

Sustainability impositions

Lack of understanding of agriculture

Removal of wards system

Agriculture won't be recognised in decisions due to greater focus on urban needs

A number of representatives spoke about changes in the community demographic, and that both visitors and recent residents didn't understand what being in an agricultural region entails. There were comments around the need for them to be more aware of the reality of farming machinery, noise, and safety concerns.

Lower SW Growers Group felt that the Shire also didn't understand the realities of farming, and that you couldn't visit the Shire without "tripping over a sustainability officer". They felt that there was duplication of environmental red tape with other tiers of government, and that an agricultural officer or equivalent counterpart could be created to support interactions with the Shire.

The Shire spoke about the roles that local government plays in supporting the community – Funding, Providing, Facilitating, Advocating, and Regulating. The final role, regulation, was primarily related to the Local Planning Scheme, so the other four roles were explored. With limited budget and competing demands, the role in advocating for more support from other levels of government was explored. A brainstorm of what the agricultural community wanted to see more of is captured below.

WANTED:

Shire support and sponsorship

Infrastructure

State and Federal funding

Support identifying funding

Support with funding applications

Better communication of housing flexibility for agricultural lots

Communication to community and visitors around importance of agriculture

Communication around agriculture to manage expectations – cows mooing, tractors, truck, etc

Setting a positive vision for agriculture

The Shire summarised that the initial driver for the agricultural policy motion came from concerns with the LPS2 that had mostly been resolved, though the Shire officers' recommendation to class all agricultural land as Priority Agriculture still needed Council endorsement (at upcoming 13 November meeting) and then the final say would sit with State Government.

Outside of the Scheme, the Shire reflected that key concerns – apart from broader societal and demographic changes – seemed to be about effective communication between the Shire and the agricultural community. The difference within a local government context between a policy and a strategy was discussed, and the group were asked to consider whether a policy was the best mechanism for giving a stronger voice to the sector. It was acknowledged that not enough notice was given for the meeting, and a follow-up meeting would be held after hay cutting was over, pending a poll to find the best date.



Agriculture consultation session 2

December 2024, 10am-12pm, Mainbreak meeting room

Present:

Shire: Andrea Selvey, Saul Cresswell, Matt Cuthbert

LSWGG: Matt Neild

LBLCDC: Tim Crimp

Dairy Council WA: Laura Stocker, Jacqui Biddulph

AMRCCE: Richard Pearce

Shire (Saul) gave a presentation on the previous session, what we heard, what an economic development policy might entail.

Group discussed:

- Farmer isolation and mental health
- Changing demographic of the shire, and farming kids feeling ostracised at school
- Opportunities for greater promotion of agriculture:
 - o Newspaper features
 - o Flags in Margaret River's main street
 - o Talks and displays at the Margaret River Farmers Market
 - o Agriculture show
 - o Displays and more at the libraries, with lots of foot traffic
 - o Local produce festival
 - o Welcome pack for new residents
- Media perception of farmers is unfair
- Threat of elites taking over farmland for carbon projects and development
- Lack of community understanding and awareness of agriculture, and the need for education
- Ideology encroaching on farmers trying to produce food – Fed, State, Local. Gov, live sheep export
- Shire should stick to roads, rates, rubbish and "stay in your lane"
- Support to farms: roads, water, engaging and talking when you're doing policy and plans.
- Roads: need a vertical clearance from trees. Don't just leave witches hats at dangerous roadside logs for months on end. Road maintenance needs to be a priority.
- Need to get a communication line established.

- Need a unified voice for agriculture – to get the ag groups together to talk
- Find the common ground between farmers and new residents – healthy land and food
- Outside pressures push the farm price / ha upwards
- Need to understand impact on person / industry before making decisions
- Shire needs to help facilitate rather than just put up obstacles. Agriculture liaison officer similar to events officer would help
- Dam cleaning on website says needs planning approval (incorrect)
- TAFE opportunity for training pathway – on farm training of local students rather than only relying on itinerant workers
- Next follow up chat in Feb/March (early autumn)



Agriculture Policy update



Outline

- Recent consultation
- Background to the policy motion
- Peek at agriculture in the Shire
- Next steps and options





Agricultural consultation

First session – 21 October

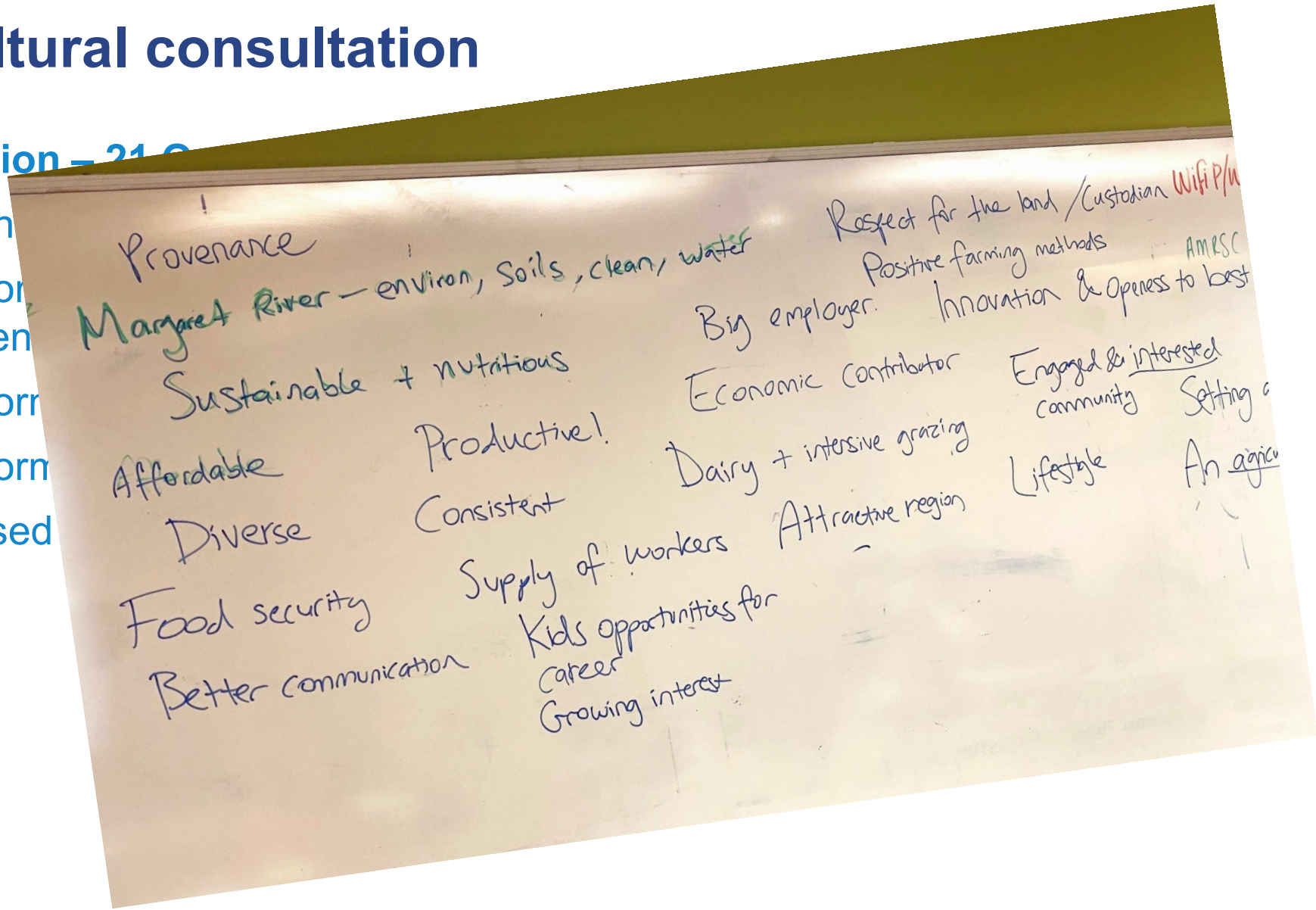
- Postponed second consultation until 2 Dec, after hay cutting
- Brainstormed strengths of the region, potentially to inform a future vision statement
- Brainstormed current and future challenges
- Brainstormed what the agricultural community would like to see more of
- Discussed the origins of the motion for an Agriculture Policy



Agricultural consultation

First session – 21/6

- Postponed
- Brainstorming statements
- Brainstorming
- Brainstorming
- Discussed





Motion to develop an agricultural policy

General Electors Meeting: 24 January 2024

Motion put forward by Brad Noakes:

The Shire develops an Agricultural Policy document to guide/inform future Planning and Council regarding direction, infrastructure, profile & sustainability of commercial farming within the whole Shire.

Ordinary Council Meeting: 28 February 2024

Council passed a motion:

That Council initiates the development of an Economic Development – Agricultural Policy document with the objective of providing guidance and information to inform future Council decisions. This document will focus on the trends, infrastructure, profile, and sustainability of farming throughout the entire shire and act as a supplement to the Shire's Local Planning Strategy 2022 and associated schemes.



Snapshot of local agriculture

Dairy

Grapes

Beef

Lamb

Vegetables

Avocados

Wool

Forestry

Eggs

Nuts

Aquaculture





Snapshot of local agriculture cont.

Employment

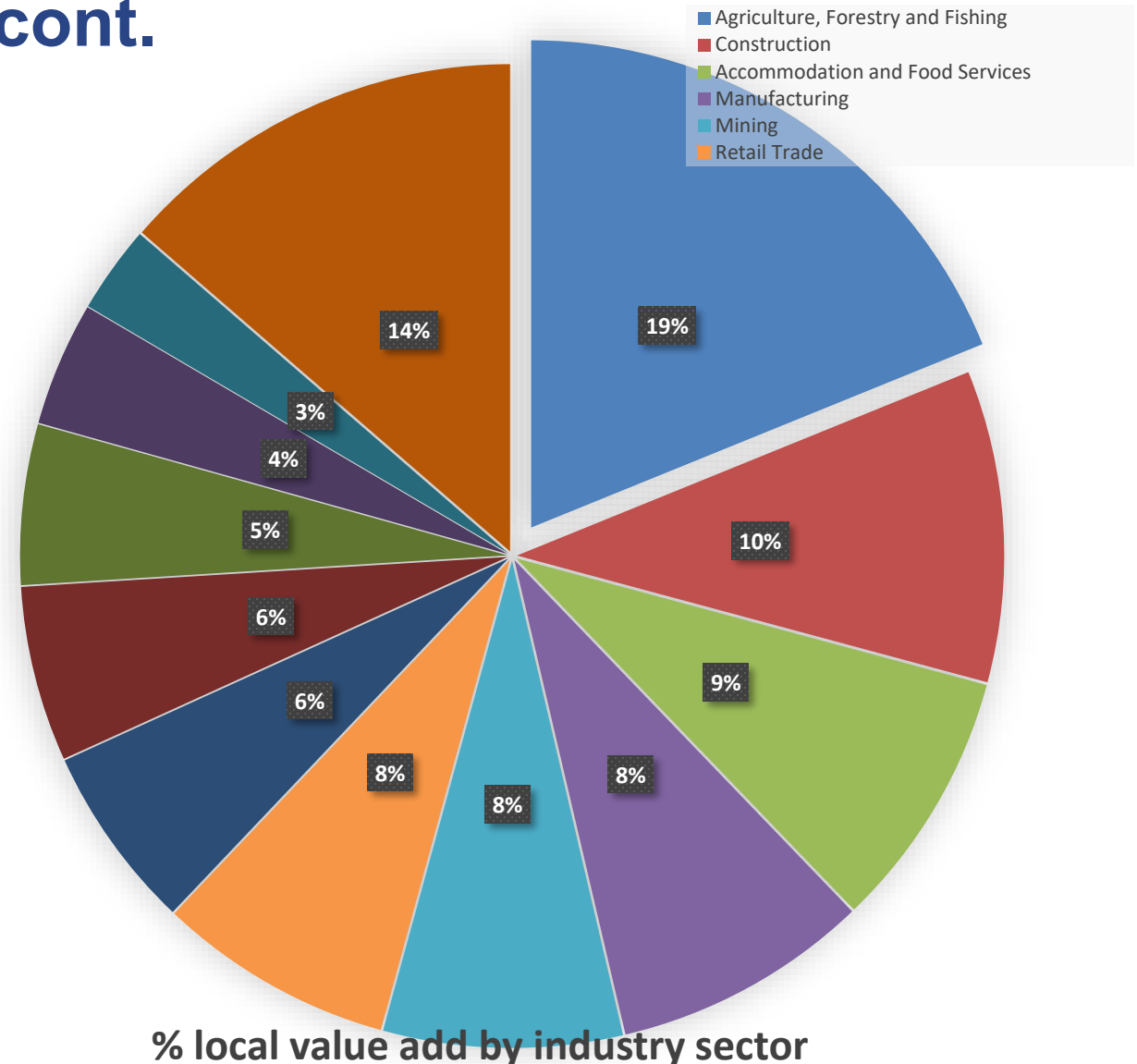
The biggest employer in the Shire: 12.9% FTE employment. This has gone down since the 2011 census, where 17.3% of local employment was in agriculture.

Economic value

Output: \$375 million of output (second only to Construction at \$399 million);

Value-add: \$188 million in value-add (significantly more than Construction's \$103 million).

Another \$67.4 million in food and beverage value-add.





Economic development context of agriculture

Production and processing

(input costs, worker accommodation, abattoir options, infrastructure, telecommunications, farm diversification such as agritourism)

Supply chain and markets

(Busselton Airport freight, Bunbury Port containerisation, local consumption, Food Hubs, changing consumer demands)

Sustainability

(carbon regulations, market demand, native logging ban, live sheep export ban, healthy estuaries, climate change, pests)



Economic development context of agriculture

Production and processing

(input costs, worker accommodation, abattoir options, infrastructure, telecommunications, farm diversification such as agritourism)

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Sustainability

(carbon regulations, market demand, native logging ban, live sheep export ban, healthy estuaries, climate change, pests)



Example trend: Sustainability – carbon regulations

Examples

- EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism
- Safeguard Mechanism (2023 reform)
- Nature Repair Market Bill

Opportunities?

Threats?

Shire role?

Strengths

- Strong Regenerative Agriculture movement
- Sustainable Winegrowing program
- WA dairy: first state agricultural industry in Australia to baseline its carbon emissions
- Local soil carbon sequestration project earning carbon credits (ACCUs) utilising regenerative agriculture



Notable feedback

Agricultural sector vs agricultural community

- Changing demographic – “city dwellers” moving down here and not understanding the realities of this being a farming area
- Agriculture needs to be considered when making general decisions; e.g. Augusta streetscape
- Councillors all used to be farmers – now we don’t even have the ward system to help represent us
- Can’t visit the Shire building without tripping over a Sustainability Officer – what about an Agriculture Officer?

Make all farmers within the Shire feel as though they are valued and a part of the community.

As the biggest earner for the Shire agriculture should be celebrated just as much as tourism and given the same respect and assistance!

(2019 Business Survey)



Notable feedback

Agricultural sector vs agricultural community

- Changing demographics here

Advocacy

State & Fed funding
Identify funding
Support funding applications

Red tape overload
Shire involvement and sponsorship
Infrastructure

Ag officers

Decline in # of farms
Consolidation of farms
Subdivision

Housing
Communicate housing options

Increasing population
Working from home & not contributory to community
Sustainability impositions

Lack of understanding of agriculture
Removal of ward system
Agriculture won't be recognized in decisions due to greater focus on urban



Together...

Can we define and agree on the problem we are trying to solve?



Options

Agriculture Policy

Economic Development Policy (review)

SCP 2025-2035

Agriculture Reference Group

Quarterly outreach BBQ

Regular spotlight on agriculture

“The Augusta Margaret River Shire could consider making a conspicuous effort to honour the region’s farming heritage, informed by further discussion with the farming community. Strategies could include making a public declaration; erecting signs, monuments, and artwork; hosting an annual event for farmers or bringing farmers and other community members together; creating a Gourmet Fringe Festival showcasing local produce with talks and demonstrations by famers; greater recognition and showcasing of farmers at the Margaret River Agricultural Show.”



Options

Agriculture Policy

Economic Development Policy (review)

SCP 2025-2035

Agriculture Reference Group

Quarterly outreach BBQ

Regular spotlight on agriculture

“The Augusta Margaret River Shire could consider making the region’s farming heritage, informed by further discussion. Strategies could include making a public declaration; commissioning artwork; hosting an annual event for farmers or bringing community members together; creating a Gourmet Fringe Festival; showcasing products and demonstrations by farmers; greater recognition at the Margaret River Agricultural Show.”

ZARAUTZ FARMSTEADS.

Zarautz Town Council has recently passed a declaration recognising farmers’ contributions to the town.

The Town Council wishes to do more than just publish this declaration on paper. We want to make farmers’ work and points of view better known.

Farmsteads and farmers sustain and take care of the land and natural surroundings around the town. It is thanks to farmers that we can eat healthy, local, fresh food. And, for centuries, farmsteads have maintained their own identity and culture.

We would like to invite you to get to know our farmsteads and to respect our town’s rural surroundings. We would like to ask you to consume the quality products from our farmsteads.

Appreciating and taking care of farmsteads and their surroundings also means taking care of your town and of yourself.





Agriculture consultation session 3

Agriculture Roundtable – 11 March 2025, 1-3pm, Mainbreak meeting room

Present:

Shire: Andrea Selvey, Saul Cresswell

LSWGG: Matt Neild, Mark Murray, Erin Hutton

LBLCDC: Tim Crimp

MRRPA: Jill Wilkinson

Dairy Council WA: Jacqui Biddulph

Apologies: Amanda Whiteland, Ryan White, Judith Reynolds, Jessica Worrall, Margaret Oxley, Stephanie Godrich

Notes from the meeting:

A brief background was provided for those new to the roundtables, providing an overview of the original motion's origins regarding developing an Agriculture Policy and summary of conversation from the previous meetings.

Update on Council decision:

Saul spoke to the recent Council decision noting consultation with the agricultural community is underway, and formal recommendations will be made at the culmination of this consultation that may support a broad range of responses including but not limited to, the development of an Agricultural Policy.

What is a Policy

A policy is strategic in nature. It consists of a concise statement of strategic objectives or guiding principles that set the direction of subsequent decisions and actions. A policy will assist with:

- meeting community expectations and achieving strategic objectives;
- complying with relevant legislation and standards;
- promoting consistency, accountability, operational efficiency; and reducing risk.

Policy questions to explore:

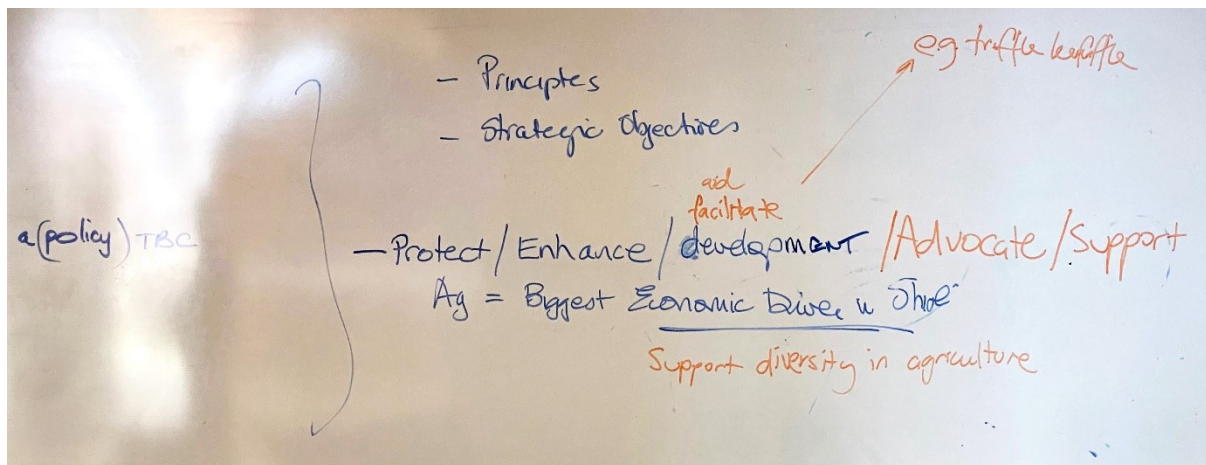
- What principles should underly the Shire's approach to agriculture?

- What strategic objectives does the agriculture sector want to see?

Vision

Jacqui articulated a starting point for a vision, which was further added to by the group. It is very much a draft, but focuses on the Shire working to protect, enhance, facilitate development of, advocate for, and support local agriculture.

Mark added a note about the diversity of agriculture in the Shire, and Jacqui noted the need to make a distinction between large-scale export oriented agriculture vs smaller producers who are also responsible for marketing and selling their product.



Protecting

The group discussed what “protecting” agriculture would look like, and it was noted that it wasn’t just about encroachment of development and other issues related to the Local Planning Scheme, but also included protection from weeds and pests, roads, etc.

Another point was around protection from red tape encroaching on productivity. Saul noted that the sense among staff was that the Shire is mostly administering State and Federal regulations, and any examples of additional “red tape” added by the Shire would be helpful. Some examples were given, such as a requirement to vegetate newly built dam banks, Shire hold-ups understanding water treatment systems that already had DWER approval, etc. The group requested the Shire have an Agriculture Officer or other role that could help translate planning and other matters, and champion the agriculture sector within the organisation. (Note that some local governments have a “business chaperone” type position that plays this role for the wider business sector).

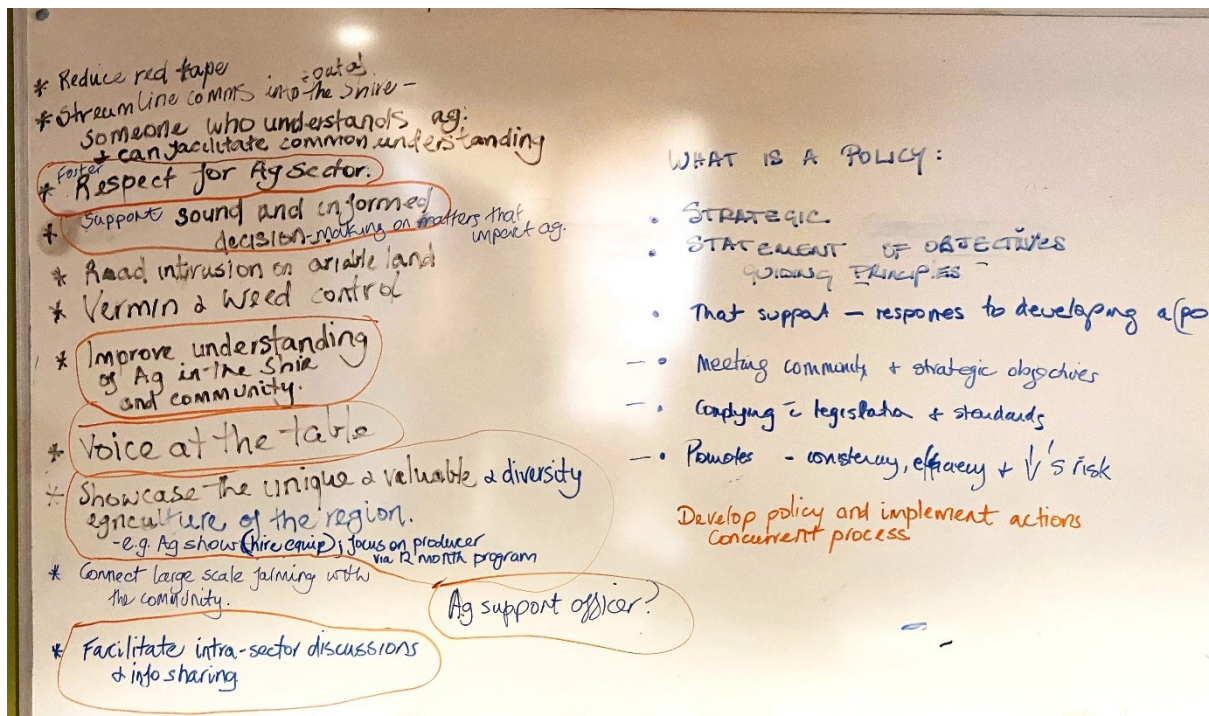
Andrea noted that “red tape” is a term used to describe regulations by those on one side of them, and that they are always meant to be there to protect an interest. The challenge is navigating the diverse and sometimes conflicting interests. Protecting agricultural land from subdivision, for example, or safeguarding agricultural enterprise from new neighbours leveling noise complaints is a type of red tape. Matt pointed out that the concern was with red tape impacting day to day operations.

Saul pointed out that to progress this conversation further will require representation from the Planning and Regulatory team, and this could be the focus of a specific session looking at some of these examples to understand what could be improved.

Enhancing and facilitating development

The group considered what roles the Shire could play in enhancing agriculture, and Truffle Kerfuffle was given as an example of how one region is helping elevate and enhance agriculture. Saul asked Jill to speak to the recently launched Margaret River provenance brand, and Jill spoke to the desire to have more farmers and visibility of farmers at the Margaret River Farmers Market.

It was noted that the large-scale export-oriented farmers have difficulty with local connection and visibility by the community but there was interest in exploring ways to divert small amount of produce into local markets. E.g. Saul raised the idea of a cooperatively owned milk pasteuriser, but Jacqui noted that some farmers are locked into exclusive supply contracts.



Due to time restraints the rest of the draft vision statement wasn't explored any further, but notes on the strategic objectives that might be included in a policy were taken (photograph above). The group was questioned about the value of the conversation so far, and it was generally felt to have been a valuable three sessions, with a sense of improved consideration of agriculture by the Shire over the last six months.

There was a suggestion to move from the more informal, open-ended conversations to a structured conversation, and Mark requested that a draft policy be developed from this point as a start for the group to continue developing. Brad also requested that we start looking at the low-hanging fruit rather than wait up to 12 months for the policy to be developed. Saul asked the group to consider what some top actions would be that could be undertaken in the short-term, and there was consensus that working to get agriculture back at the agriculture show would be a great step.

There was a question of how to reach the wider agriculture community once a draft policy was developed. Brad had mentioned the value in the farmer-to-farmer conversation happening in the room and the potential for some kind of forum. This might also be an appropriate event to promote the draft policy when ready. Tim mentioned that farmers are

pressed for time, and Jacquie commented that it might be easier getting shared buy-in to a vision than a whole policy.

Additional notes

There wasn't time to discuss the below, but the following may also be of interest.

Judith Reynolds advised that the following training pathway for local students exists:

- South Regional TAFE currently offers:
 - AHC20122 Certificate II in Agriculture as a Traineeship (including school-based) coordinated through our Manjimup campus. More details can be found [here](#).
 - AHC30122 Certificate III in Agriculture as a Traineeship, also coordinated via our Manjimup campus. Further information is available [here](#).
- Currently in development:
 - FBP20521 Certificate II in Wine Industry Operations as a Traineeship (including school-based) through our Margaret River campus, expected to be available from Term 2 this year.

Jon Berry (DPIRD) wanted to share the following funding opportunity:

- [Small Scale Abattoir Feasibility Voucher Program](#)

Two researchers independently requested we promote these surveys:

Surveys for noting:

"Achieving Net-Zero Emissions in Agriculture: Developing Decision Support Systems for Land and Enterprise Managers," exploring farmers' perceptions of net-zero emissions and decision-making processes in agriculture.

Brief online survey aimed at gathering insights on how farmers perceive the concept of net-zero emissions, and the role of decision-making tools in GHG management in agriculture. The responses will be instrumental in shaping decision support systems that are tailored to farmers' needs, particularly in managing greenhouse gas emissions.

Survey Link: https://federation.syd1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8IJco7iA9krdB7o

The survey will take approximately 20-25 minutes to complete, and all responses will be kept anonymous.

Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) impacts in agriculture, specifically through understanding farmers' perceptions of sustainability and their data management practices.

The survey is brief and will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Participation is completely voluntary, and all responses will be kept confidential.

Link: https://federation.syd1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6Mqz9Vzs9m7kdNk



[Farmers' Perception Survey: Sustainable Agriculture, ESG and Smart Farming](#)

This study aims to develop a farm-level ESG framework and tool, that can be used by farmers to quantify the ESG impact at farm. As a part of the project, this survey will capture farmers' perceptions on agriculture sustainability and ESG and understand the availability of farm level data from the Australian farmers.

url.au.m.mimecastprotect.com

Please feel free to contact me at bholap@students.federation.edu.au or any research member as mentioned in PLIS (attached with this email), if you have any questions.



Agriculture consultation session 4

Agriculture Roundtable – 5 August 2025, 2:00-3:30pm, Mainbreak meeting room

Present:

AMR Shire: Andrea Selvey, Saul Cresswell, Matt Cuthbert

LSWGG: Matt Nield, Mark Murray

MRRPA: Jill Wilkinson

Dairy Council WA: Jacqui Biddulph

SW Regional TAFE: Roz Brabazon

AMRCCE: Jessica Worrall

Apologies: Amanda Whiteland, Ryan White, Judith Reynolds, Margaret Oxley, Stephanie Godrich, Kate Tarrant

Notes from the meeting:

A brief background was provided for those new to the roundtables, providing an overview of how the roundtables came about and summary of conversation from the previous meetings.

Agriculture Policy

Saul apologised for only providing the Shire's draft policy through to the group the day prior to the meeting as it was still receiving staff input. A policy owned by the Shire needs to be acceptable to both the Council and the Administration, ensuring it is not committing to more than our resources can fulfil. Saul thanked LSWGG for providing their policy, and showed that there was a strong alignment between the two policies, including directly pulling content from the LSWGG one where it had been overlooked.

The format of the Shire's policy is in the required structure, and focuses on high level strategic commitments rather than detailed, time-bound actions. The group was then invited to provide feedback and comments.

Matt Nield stated that the major focus of the policy should be on improving the Shire's understanding of the needs of the sector, and the objectives and policies relating to communication avenues, engagement with peak bodies, etc should be moved to the top. There was also concern that the preamble was communicated in a manner that focused on localised supply chains, and greater recognition of the region's contribution to state, national and international markets was required.

There was a suggestion to formalise the Agriculture Reference Group through the policy rather than say "consideration of an Agriculture Reference Group". Following the meeting internal discussion led us to change the wording to "via an Agriculture Reference Group or similar mechanism". The rationale is that a formal Reference Group might not be the best

mechanism permanently, and it would be good to have the flexibility for this to take the best format without having to change the policy itself.

There was mention of the benefit in collaborating with the City of Busselton, and an additional policy action has been added to reference this. There was question around the definition of “food and fibre” and whether it capture all agricultural production. This definition has been added to the policy. The policy action focused on managing weed and pest threats had mentioned collaboration with land care groups, but the suggestion was to also reference private landholders and industry groups. This has now been updated.

Objective 5 (To support local producers to identify, access and distribute to markets) had been a topical one within the Shire due to concerns about local government’s role. Discussion with the group highlighted that this wording needed to change, and it has now been rolled into Objective 3 and reworded.

Jill mentioned that the Margaret River provenance brand is currently in hiatus, though Ryan White can speak more authoritatively on this at a future session.

Promotional campaign

In accord with comments from previous meetings, the Shire has progressed planning for a promotional campaign to celebrate local agriculture without unnecessarily waiting for the policy to be developed. With very constrained resources, we are halfway through applying for grant funding to support this project, with a Nutrien/FRRR grant closing on 7 August.

The group agreed this was a valuable project and worth continuing the grant application. They were happy to provide Letters of Support and participate in the below group photo.



Training pathways

With Roz coming all the way from Manjimup the group had a brief chat about training options for building a skilled local workforce. She affirmed previous comments from Heath Johnstone that there seems to be an increased interest in farming among young people.

The following training pathways for local students exist:

- South Regional TAFE currently offers in Margaret River:
 - AHC30722 Certificate III in Horticulture at Margaret River campus
 - AHC40422 Certificate IV in Horticulture at Margaret River campus
- South Regional TAFE offers in Manjimup:
 - AHC20122 Certificate II in Agriculture as a Traineeship (including school-based) coordinated through our Manjimup campus. More details can be found [here](#).
 - AHC30122 Certificate III in Agriculture as a Traineeship, also coordinated via our Manjimup campus. Further information is available [here](#).
- Currently in development for Margaret River:
 - FBP20521 Certificate II in Wine Industry Operations as a Traineeship (including school-based) through our Margaret River campus, expected to be available from Term 2 this year.

The Department of Education's PRIMED program was also mentioned: [PRIMED overview | Education Resources](#).

To dive further into what the local gaps are and developing more local training options, a specific session just on this topic might be worthwhile.

Margaret River Agriculture Show

Saul mentioned that some Shire staff had been meeting and communicating with the Ag Show committee to understand what was required for supporting animals back at the show. The Shire is still waiting for guidance on what infrastructure is required and an estimate of costs to consider a plan of action going forwards, and is expecting to hear back from the committee following their meeting on 22 July.

Appendix B

**Draft policy submitted by the Lower South West Growers Group and
preface to the maiden Agricultural Policy**

Draft Agricultural Policy – Shire of Augusta Margaret River

1. Policy Purpose

To strategically guide the Shire's consultation and engagement with and support for the agricultural sector, ensuring the long-term viability, diversity, economic sustainability and productivity of local agriculture, and balancing the needs of producers, the community, and the environment, understanding the Agricultural crossover with nearly every section of the community.

2. Vision Statement

The Shire will work to **protect, enhance, facilitate the development of, advocate for, and support** local agriculture in all its forms – from small-scale local producers to larger export-oriented enterprises – recognising its economic, environmental, cultural and social value.

3. Guiding Principles

- **Protect:** Support farmers from adverse influence knowing the importance of the foodbowl and other farming products to society.
 - **Understanding:** That farming enterprises need to be profitable in order to be sustainable.
 - **Inclusivity and Diversity:** Support for a broad range of agricultural operations, including small-scale, organic, traditional, and large-scale commercial producers.
 - **Sustainability:** Promote a variety of sustainable farming practices that protect soil, water, biodiversity, and productivity.
 - **Collaboration:** Foster partnerships among producers, industry groups, educational institutions, and government bodies.
 - **Transparency and Efficiency:** Consult and communicate with agricultural stakeholders to reduce unnecessary regulatory and strategic burdens on agriculture while ensuring compliance with relevant legislation. Ensure transparency and collaboration with the Agricultural sector at all times, especially regarding strategic objectives.
 - **Innovation and Education:** Support agricultural innovation and skill development through training pathways and emerging technologies.
-

4. Strategic Objectives

4.1 Protect Agricultural Land, Agricultural Water and Enterprise

- Safeguard agricultural zones from encroachment by incompatible land uses whilst still allowing diversity.
- Advocate for planning policies that limit subdivision of productive farmland. To vocally champion Agriculture by advocating for farming sectors, particularly when they are under threat, and seek to educate the wider community on value of local food and fibre.
- To manage weed, pest, and disease within local government land whilst working collaboratively with landcare groups to provide initiatives to support biosecurity management on privately owned farms
- Address regulatory constraints impacting day-to-day farm operations.
- To consult with the relevant agricultural Stakeholders /Primary Industry representatives in the local area on issues pertaining to Agriculture and farming.

4.3 Enhance Local Agricultural Visibility and Identity

- Support local marketing initiatives such as the **Margaret River provenance brand**.
- Facilitate participation of farmers in events such as the **Margaret River Farmers Market** and the **Agricultural Show**.
- Promote regional identity and agri-tourism through events (e.g., “Truffle Kerfuffle”-style festivals).

4.4 Enable Local Markets and Value Chains

- Investigate assistance to farmers and farming related business to support paddock to plate production to sales
- To constantly review planning constraints to support and expediate the development of infrastructure in order to support a local supply chain (i.e. small abattoirs).
- Encourage and assist to enable local sales of produce.

4.5 Build Capacity and Skills in Agriculture

- Promote and expand training opportunities such as:
 - o Cert II & III in Agriculture via South Regional TAFE.
 - o Cert II in Wine Industry Operations (Margaret River campus).
- To encourage collaboration with local schools, TAFEs, and agricultural bodies to attract and retain youth in farming careers.

4.6 Promote Sustainability

- Encourage on farm data collection, benchmarking and smart farming to guide environmental, social, and economic performance.
- Facilitate awareness of funding and research opportunities (e.g., Small Scale Abattoir Feasibility Program).

5. Implementation and Next Steps

· Short-Term Actions:

- o That the AMR Shire, regarding agricultural planning related decisions, meets at least one of the following: a. Director of Planning gains and maintains Agricultural training/skills, b. consultation with Agricultural Consultants (i.e. Planfarm, Consult Ag, Farmanco etc), c consult with a committee of local farmers, d consult with Industry bodies (i.e. Dairy Australia, Meat and Livestock Australia, WA Farmers Federation, Pastoralist and Graziers Association).
- o Draft planning guidance to reduce local regulatory roadblocks.
- o Assist/enable re-establish agriculture presence at the regions agricultural show.

· Mid-Term Goals:

- o Develop a communications plan to engage the wider farming community.
- o Host a **Farmer Forum** to review and refine the policy.
- o Publish and promote the final Agricultural Policy alongside training and funding opportunities
- o Promote and educate the importance of Agriculture in society.

6. Monitoring and Review

The Agricultural Policy will be reviewed every three/four years with industry consultation and local stakeholders (i.e. LSWGG), with annual reporting to Council and industry on progress toward objectives and responsiveness to industry feedback. Every three/four years review local planning documents and approval processes to identify and remove redundant “red tape” that inhibits agriculture.

Preface to the maiden Agricultural Policy – Shire of Augusta Margaret River

Executive summary

The **Draft Agriculture Policy 2025** proposes the maiden policy to support agriculture within the Margaret River region. The draft presents a core framework intentionally limited in scope. The limitations are designed to accommodate the policy's organic development over time.

Overview

Agriculture is one of the Margaret River Shire's longest standing industries and remains one of the most important. Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing combine for over \$130 million in annual output and are together one of the region's largest sources of employment¹.

Government policy of the early 1900's encouraged the initial agricultural and farming activities in our local area. This included frameworks such as the Group Settlement Scheme, the Land Act 1933, and Conditional Title land purchase. To help develop the agricultural sector, these policies incentivized settlement in farming districts and dispensed heavily discounted crown land subject to conditions. These conditions typically required making improvements to the land for farming, residence on the land within a set timeframe, and directly mandated clearing of forest and native vegetation to develop farmland. Similar strategies existed Australia wide.

Today, Margaret River has become synonymous with regenerative, organic and ecologically responsible agriculture. The region's positive agricultural reputation also strengthens other key local industries – particularly food and wine events, hospitality, eco-tourism, and the Shire's broader amenity. Agriculture in Margaret River is world-renowned for high value produce – value that is not only defined by the quality of the region's output, but also by the region's self-cultured principles of ethical and sustainable environmental practices.

Compared to the historical government support for agriculture, the present-day regulatory setting is increasingly in conflict with the industry's viability, and long-term security. Requirements introduced in recent years by State and Local government have resulted in:

- a) Heavy regulatory compliance burdens;
- b) Unprecedented land use and water-access restrictions;
- c) Planning schemes which override agricultural use;
- d) Repeated loss of agricultural lands through rezoning;
- e) Widespread increased costs, and reduced productivity.

Examples of specific policies of the Augusta Margaret River Shire impacting agriculture include the Climate Action Plans (Part 1, 2020; and Part 2, 2024), Overarching Sustainability Policy (2023), Scott River Economic Strategy (2020), and most recently the Local Biodiversity Strategy (2025). These policies have not been developed with adequate input from agricultural stakeholders, and reflect a continuation of the Shire's poor community engagement results showcased by the independent surveys of 2019 and 2023².

The draft Agriculture Policy 2025 has been proactively developed by the industry, for the industry. It invites a unique opportunity for direct engagement, collaboration, and mutually beneficial cooperation with the Shire of Augusta Margaret River.

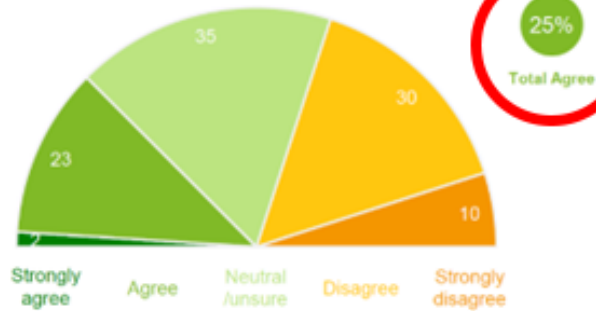
¹ Economic.ID, Margaret River Regional Profile, National Institute of Economic and Industry Research, 2023-24.

² Markyt Community Scorecards 2019, 2023, prepared by CATALYSE for the Shire of Augusta-Margaret River

2019 – Key Results from Independent Markyt Community Scorecard Survey:

Shire has a good understanding of community needs

Level of agreement
% of respondents



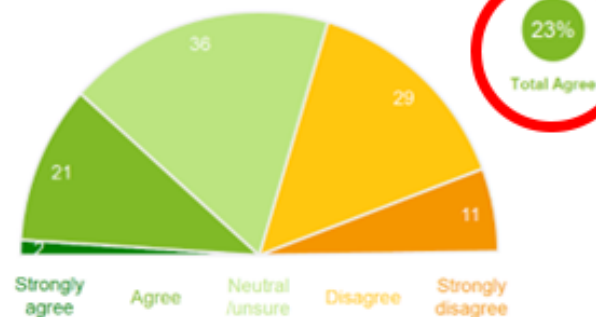
MARKYT  Industry Standards
% agree



Shire of Augusta-Margaret River	25
Industry High	61
Industry Average	34

Shire listens to and respects residents' views

Level of agreement
% of respondents



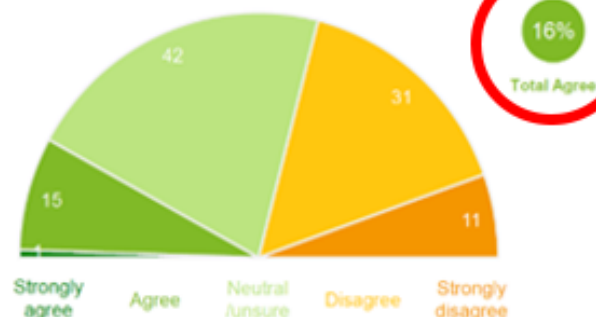
MARKYT  Industry Standards
% agree



Shire of Augusta-Margaret River	23
Industry High	55
Industry Average	33

Shire clearly explains reasons for decisions and how residents' views have been taken into account

Level of agreement
% of respondents

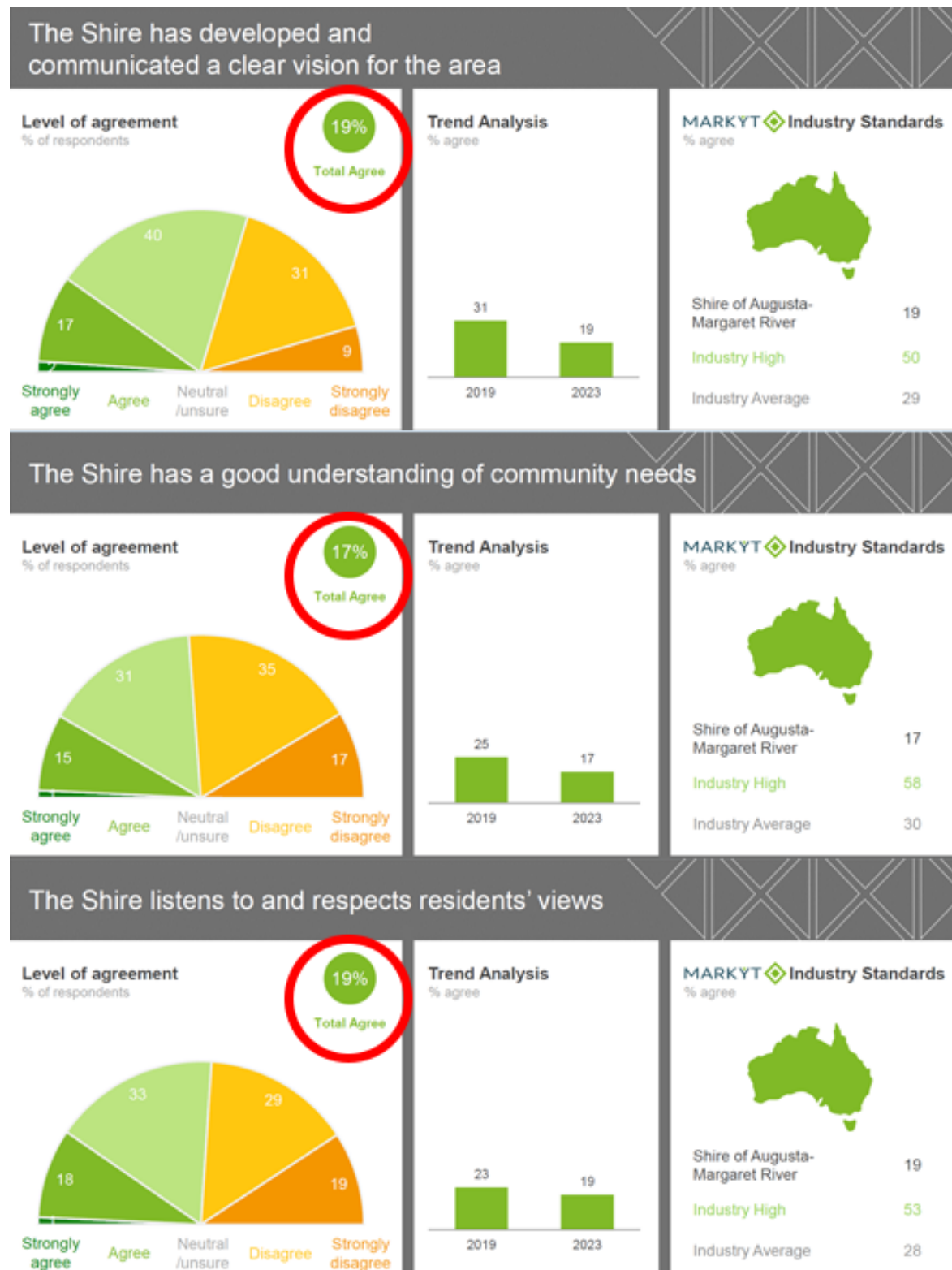


MARKYT  Industry Standards
% agree



Shire of Augusta-Margaret River	16
Industry High	45
Industry Average	27

2023 – Key Results from Independent Markyt Community Scorecard Survey:



Appendix C

Participants feedback on versions of the Draft Agricultural Policy

Appendix C - Agricultural Policy Stakeholder Engagement Report



Participants feedback on versions of the Draft Agricultural Policy

Participant Comment	Response / Proposed Action
Comments and suggested changes to the Draft Agricultural Policy Version 2	
Thanks for sending through the draft Agriculture Policy and I hope the roundtable went well yesterday. Unfortunately, I continue to be an apology at these roundtables, as they fall on a non-workday. I'm thrilled that the Shire is progressing an Agriculture Policy. I have added some comments to the draft and hope they might be helpful and considered.	<i>Thank you so much for your considered feedback. I will be sending an email to the whole group later today with an updated version but wanted to acknowledge and respond to some of your comments directly.</i> <i>The preamble has been refined a bit, and food security has remained in there but also been brought up to the overarching objective. I've also taken your definition of food security and added it to the back of the policy. Some of your comments pointed to great additions that would be possible if we had more capacity, such as facilitating partnerships across government, business, industry, tertiary institutions, civil society, etc. In some cases, I have attempted to broaden the scope a little bit, but in others have retained the original statement. Our leadership is very keen to not create false expectations in the current context of very constrained resources. In the case of adding an objective around supporting research, this feels like one that is beyond our scope at this point in time.</i> <i>Your comment about incorporating on the Agriculture Reference Group actors working across the food supply chain is a great point and any advice on who we might have overlooked would be fantastic. I imagine as a starting point the reference group would include those groups invited to this roundtable, which comprises:</i> • Lower SW Growers Group • Lower Blackwood Landcare • Margaret River Regional Producers Association • Margaret River Wine Association • Margaret River Senior High School (Ag Department) • SW Regional TAFE • WA Farmers

- Margaret River Agricultural Show committee
- Augusta Margaret River Clean Community Energy
- 2 Oceans Poultry Club

Comments and suggested changes to the Draft Agricultural Policy Version 4

"Please also find attached a revised Draft Agriculture Policy following our discussion at last week's Agriculture Roundtable. Please provide any feedback on the policy by **Tuesday 19 August**, so we can get it to the current Council before elections. "

In response to the above, can you please explain the sudden intensity in time frame.

We have had a steady walk up until now, why the sudden sprint to the finish? Especially trying to put in front of council the day before caretaker mode.

Some of these articles are hard to take seriously when they use inflammatory wording to get a biased narrative across, Flash Drought, if this were a real thing then in WA we have them annually, and in some case more than once.

Until the definition of drought is recognised nationally and deals with the differences between states can any of this be taken seriously.

I'll be wrapping up very soon and hoped to have a draft ready for public consultation before finishing, but if this is causing unnecessary pressure or feels rushed then we can take a steadier pace. Please note that this proposed next step is just to go out for wider circulation and the policy can still undergo further refinement. Let me know if I've misinterpreted, but I was feeling like it was pretty close. I feel it reflects the breadth of concerns raised over our roundtables and has close alignment with the policy provided by LSWGG. If anybody has a strong view on keeping it moving quickly vs taking a steadier pace, please let me know.

Follow up email received to the comment above:

Concern on the rush is more about the public consultation and timing as we approach a particularly busy time for those that have the most skin in the game.

Happy with policies 1.1 & 1.2 as these were the key drivers of requesting a strategy to overcome what was a major problem within the shire.

A positive outcome that, was not thought about in original proposal is the shire

supporting and advocating for ag through different channels.

Could the red be changed to for example processing facilities for meat and horticulture, saleyards, livestock and horticulture depots

4.1 Advocate to other tiers of government for greater investment in supportive infrastructure, including development of regional meat processing facilities.

The greatest threat to this is community consultation and people with no skin in the game being vocal and pushing ideology. I know some do not like this word but in Ag. Ideology is a thought bubble that does not stack up productivity wise, sustainably and economically. It driven by uneducated emotion, not science, fact or economics. It drives down production and lessens food security.

As stated in the final Officer recommendation that Council initiates the development of an **Economic Development** – Ag policy..... focus on the sustainability of **commercial farming**. With this in mind I question why there were Environmental Groups such as the MREC, Nature conservation and the AMRCCE present and participating in the development of said policy. These groups members have nothing to do with commercial farming in the area.

I believe this was discussed at the first or second roundtable and it seemed that participants were comfortable to have these other stakeholders at the table. But as you suggest below, perhaps we refocus the group for the final review after the public consultation is concluded for the smaller group to review and advise on community input.

I disagree that the Economic Development- Ag Policy with a focus on sustainability of commercial farming should be cross referenced to the Strategic Community Plan, the Local Biodiversity Strategy and include First Nations considerations. Once again this does not follow the Officer recommendations of the Moved motion. In particular the requirement to consult the whole of community.... Which enables input from interested parties or individuals who have little or no idea about commercial farming and the impacts decisions made at the local government level will have on the commercial farming businesses. Ie why on earth should these people be able to

Point 1 – cross referencing. Everything we do needs to align with our Strategic Community Plan. In terms of the Biodiversity Strategy, several of the policy positions in the draft Ag Policy, align with the Biodiversity Strategy e.g., 5.3 Manage weed, pest, and disease threats...” In terms of first nation considerations, I presume you are referring to C5. I think the reference is more about the first half of that statement being welcoming and inclusive to all. But if it something the group feels strongly about, we can remove that reference. I don’t think it is particularly relevant for the Ag Policy.
Point 2 – community consultation. A policy development framework requires us to put all policies out in draft for community to have an opportunity to have input or at least be aware of

impact lives and businesses of which they know nothing about.!?)

the proposed policy position. I support that approach otherwise when a policy is presented to Council, community members who were not given an opportunity to have a say can raise concerns that perhaps were not considered. It is better to be as well informed as possible in advance. That does not mean we have to agree with all input, but it is important that our community gets a chance to see and comment on policies in draft and it is our standard practice.

7.1 Encourage on farm data collection, benchmarking and smart farming to guide environmental, social and economic performance. THIS SHOULD BE IN THE PREAMBLE – NOT UNDER POLICY. FARMERS WILL NOT WANT TO SHARE INDIVIDUAL DATA WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT. BROAD GENERAL DATA COULD BE SHARED WITHIN THE LOCAL INDUSTRY. Individual data is owned by the individual business and should be shared on a voluntary basis only.

We can certainly move that to the preamble if that is what the group would like. I don't think it was ever intended that information be shared with the local government. It was always intended as voluntary – that is why the word encourage was used, with the intent that data will assist farmers – perhaps they may wish to share with each other on a voluntary basis but not expected that it would be to share with the Shire. But as I said, if the group would like to see that policy statement moved to the preamble as per your suggestion, we would be supportive.

To be blunt, the driver behind the AMR farm working groups was/is to ensure that Agriculture is protected and individual land owners are considered and consulted when changes made at the local government level will either intentionally or unintentionally positively or negatively impact their business and private property rights. Which I think we have been very consistent about from our initial meetings with the Planners in 2023 to date.

Agreed, that is what the policy is trying to articulate. If you have any specific word changes to ensure that is made clearer, I would love to hear them.

I propose that the final review of the Draft Policy take place with the following present at the round table.

Happy to support a smaller representative group doing the final review after the public consultation period closes.

The following text shows suggested changes to the policy forwarded by several participants of the Roundtables. Commentary has been provided where suggested amendments have not been incorporated into the final draft.

Key

Strikethrough: Request for text to be deleted from the draft policy.

Blue text: Request for additional text.

Yellow highlight: Request for an amendment to the text or additional text.

Overarching Objective

To ensure the Shire's processes and decisions are supportive of agriculture, and to strategically guide the Shire's consultation and engagement with and support for the agricultural sector, ensuring the long-term viability, diversity, economic sustainability and productivity of local agriculture, and balancing the needs of producers, the community, and the environment, understanding the Agricultural crossover with nearly every section of the community, and acknowledging a thriving and sustainable agriculture sector that underpins food security, sustainable land management, and a sense of belonging for our valued farmers.

Preamble

The Shire of Augusta Margaret River has a deep history of and is home to a diversity of highly productive agricultural enterprises, including livestock, dairy, viticulture and horticulture. Our producers vary in scale, with significant quantities of food and fibre exported across the state and the country, and even into international markets. Agriculture within the shire is a vitally important contributor to food security, livelihoods, and local identity. This primary production underpins additional value-add enterprises, including the Margaret River region's esteemed wine offering, and supports a food culture leveraged by the tourism industry.

While recognising that some ancillary uses can complement primary production, the Shire seeks to retain the primacy of agricultural land-use on agricultural lots, utilising the Local Planning Scheme, Local Planning Strategy and other planning mechanisms.

This Agricultural Policy does not seek to replicate land use considerations made via these other mechanisms, but rather address other concerns raised by the agricultural community related to economic development and social outcomes and show support to the industry.

Understanding in agriculture that profit is not a dirty word and that agriculture requires water.

Thanks for your feedback. The Director and I have reviewed and tried to incorporate your changes to the best extent possible, while being mindful of keeping the policy succinct.

I am also mindful of not limiting the policy to specific current situation – e.g., when we speak about advocacy you have included examples such as processing facilities for meat and horticulture, saleyards, livestock and horticulture depots. I think at a policy level we should keep it at a higher level as needs will change, sometimes suddenly. I have also tried to retain a positive focus, so while I understand your statement that profit is not a dirty word, it does not seem necessary for a policy statement; instead, the policy focus is positively framed, e.g., economic sustainability, viability, etc.

Please see attached updated version with some of the suggested changes incorporated along with changes suggested by another Roundtable participant.

I have also received some additional feedback which I am reviewing.

I would like to reiterate that this draft is for public consultation purposes, so there will be opportunity for further refining post the public consultation period. Based on the commitment that we will continue to work with Ag Sector representatives post the consultation period before a final version is taken to Council, I am hoping that the group is now comfortable enough to take this version forward.

Alignment with Strategic Community Plan 2025-35

C4: Farmers and local agricultural service businesses feel valued and can thrive in a supportive economic and regulatory environment that acknowledges our responsibilities to future generations.

Objectives

2. To ensure agriculture and its farmers have a recognised and valued place within our diverse community.

2a. To protect, enhance, facilitate the development of, advocate for, and support local agriculture in all its forms – from small-scale local producers to larger export-oriented enterprises – recognising its economic, environmental, cultural and social value.

3.5 Continue seeking opportunities to improve local roads where budget and grant funding allows, re-sheeting unsealed surfaces and managing vegetation and weed infestation within permitted environmental regulations.

4.1 Advocate to other tiers of government for greater investment in supportive infrastructure, for example processing facilities for meat and horticulture, saleyards, livestock and horticulture depots.

4.2 Advocate to all tiers of government to ensure regulation is well-informed, agriculturally consulted, and fit-for-purpose.

4.3 Support improvements that allow farmers to understand and easily navigate the local government(s) regulatory environment(s).

Appendix D

Draft Agricultural Policy - September 2025

Draft Agricultural Policy

Sustainable Economy and Communities



9 September 2025

This policy will be presented to Council for adoption to set governing principles in place that align with the following Strategies within the Strategic Community Plan 2025-35:

C4: Farmers and local businesses feel valued and can thrive in a supportive economic and regulatory environment that acknowledges our responsibilities to future generations.

C5: We are welcoming and inclusive to all, regardless of background and ability, and our multicultural community is enriched by Wadandi Pibelman culture and knowledge

C6: The health, safety and resilience of our communities is supported through a coordinated approach of risk management, response and recovery

E1: Natural landscapes are protected and managed to preserve and restore their biodiversity and cultural values

W2: Our communication reflects integrity, care, and a commitment to building enduring relationships with our community

W3: We actively listen, engage and collaborate with our whole community to better understand all perspectives to inform our decision-making

W8: We ensure our processes, systems and services are fit-for-purpose and evolve to meet the diverse needs of all who use them.

The Shire of Augusta Margaret River is home to a diversity of highly productive agricultural enterprises, including livestock, dairy, viticulture and horticulture. Our producers vary in scale, with significant quantities of food and fibre exported across the state and the country, and even into international markets. Agriculture within the shire is a vitally important contributor to food security, livelihoods, and local identity. This primary production underpins additional value-add enterprises, including the Margaret River region's esteemed wine offering, and supports a food culture leveraged by the tourism industry.

While recognising that some ancillary uses can complement primary production, the Shire seeks to retain the primacy of agricultural land-use on agricultural lots, utilising the Local Planning Scheme, Local Planning Strategy and other planning mechanisms.

This Agricultural Policy does not seek to replicate land use considerations made via these other mechanisms, but rather address other concerns raised by the agricultural community related to economic development and social outcomes.

Objective

The objective of this policy is to ensure the Shire's processes and decisions are supportive of a thriving and sustainable agriculture sector that underpins food security, sustainable land management, and a sense of belonging for our valued farmers.

Application

The policy will be implemented at the operational level by the Administration, utilising an action plan created in collaboration with agricultural representatives. The policy is to be reviewed every three years.

Definitions

Food and fibre: The resources derived from plants and animals that are used to sustain human life and provide materials for various products.

Food security: That all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and preferences for an active and healthy life.

Landscape-scale ecological function: Operating at a relevant spatial scale for an ecosystem's processes to adequately maintain its health, structure and integrity.

Policy

1. To support sound and informed decision making on matters that impact agriculture.

1.1 Foster communication avenues that build dialogue and trust between the agricultural sector and the Shire, including convening regular meetings with peak agricultural stakeholder groups via an Agriculture Reference Group or similar mechanism.

1.2 Build the agricultural understanding of Shire staff and Elected Members.

2. To ensure agriculture and its farmers have a recognised and valued place within our diverse community.

2.1 Promote community awareness and appreciation of local food and fibre producers, considering a variety of means to ensure breadth of coverage in the community.

2.2 Support efforts to market and showcase the valuable and diverse agriculture of the region, such as via the Margaret River Agricultural Show, Margaret River Farmers Market, Margaret River provenance brand etc.

3. To support industry access to resources, infrastructure and professional development opportunities.

3.1 Support awareness of and access to capacity building, skills development, grant funding, research and development, and education programs.

3.2 Facilitate discussion and information sharing across the agriculture sector.

3.3 Advocate for training pathways to support the next generation of skilled farmers.

3.4 Communicate opportunities as they arise for utilising regional distribution infrastructure such as Busselton Airport and Bunbury Port.

3.5 Continue seeking opportunities to improve local roads where budget and grant funding allows, re-sheeting unsealed surfaces and managing vegetation and weed infestation within permitted environmental regulations.

3.6 Investigate ways to assist “paddock to plate” production and local value chains.

4. To foster a collaborative and supportive approach from government agencies and other key stakeholders.

4.1 Advocate to other tiers of government for greater investment in supportive infrastructure, including development of regional meat processing facilities.

4.2 Advocate to all tiers of government to ensure regulation is well-informed and fit-for-purpose.

4.3 Support improvements that allow farmers to understand and easily navigate the local government regulatory environment.

4.4 Look for opportunities to collaborate with neighbouring LGAs where this will improve efficacy.

5. To encourage win-win opportunities for productive farms and landscape scale ecological function.

5.1 Support programs that build skills in ecologically responsible agriculture approaches.

5.2 Encourage collaboration between environmental experts and agricultural sector to develop farmer-led solutions to ecological threats.

5.3 Manage weed, pest and disease threats on local government land, while working collaboratively with private landholders, land care and industry groups, and government departments to support biosecurity management on non-Shire land.

6. To bolster the region’s credentials as a best-practice hub for sustainable agriculture.

6.1 Encourage on farm data collection, benchmarking and smart farming to guide environmental, social, and economic performance.

Relevant legislation

Local Government Act 1995

Related documents

- Strategic Community Plan 2025-35
- Local Planning Strategy 2036
- Local Planning Scheme 2
- Local Biodiversity Strategy (draft)

Document and version control table

Responsible Directorate	Sustainable Economy and Communities	
Contact officer	Director Sustainable Economy and Communities	
Adopted / approved by:		
Date of adoption / approval:	[TBD]	Decision Ref: [TBD]
Date of next review	[4 years from last review]	

DRAFT AGRICULTURAL POLICY

Document No.		[Synergy Document No.]	File No. GOV/38
Version	Date	Decision Ref.	Brief description
1.0	[TBD]	[TBD]	Initial Issue
1.1	[TBD]	[TBD]	Example only



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