

Illawarra Regional Food Strategy

Executive Summary

An initiative
of Wollongong
City Council,
Shellharbour City
Council and Kiama
Municipal Council



This project has been assisted by the
New South Wales Government through
its NSW Environmental Trust

HEALTHY FOOD FOR ALL IN THE ILLAWARRA

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Background

The Illawarra Regional Food Strategy seeks to outline the role of three partner councils in supporting local food security and sustainability.

The coastal local government areas (LGAs) of Kiama Municipal Council, Shellharbour City Council and Wollongong City Council comprise an area of approximately 112,000 hectares and a population of almost 290,000 people.

In our region, as across Australia and the rest of the world, there is a growing movement focussed on rebuilding a relationship with good food, which is ethically produced, with a minimal ecological impact. A vibrant, fair and sustainable regional food system will contribute to an enlivened, enterprising, connected and ultimately healthier community.

This Strategy acknowledges the valuable and ongoing role of our region's food producers, recognises our community's ambition for a healthier and more sustainable future, celebrates local leadership, and supports emerging initiatives. An Action Plan has been developed to identify clear and targeted actions for the partner councils to progress.

The strategy was adopted by Kiama Council 16 October 2013, Shellharbour City Council 29 November 2013, and Wollongong City Council 12 August 2013.

Joint statement

The Illawarra Councils recognise the important role of food in our lives, and its impact on the communities we represent. Food is at the very heart of our health and wellbeing, cultural identity, the local economy, ecological sustainability, and our connection with this unique place and each other.

Our region joins a growing movement focussed on rebuilding a relationship with good food, which is ethically produced, with minimal ecological impact. A fair and sustainable regional food system will contribute to an enlivened, enterprising, connected and ultimately healthier community.

Each of the partner councils has outlined its commitment to the sustainability and wellbeing of our communities through their Community Strategic Plans. The current

food system faces many challenges. Ecological sustainability, health and fairness will need to be addressed in order to meet the challenges of the future. Local government has an important role to play in the process of adaptation and building resilience.

This Strategy describes how, in partnership with our community, we will work together over time to realise **a vision for a vibrant, sustainable local food system that is resilient, prosperous, fair and secure.**

It includes a framework to inform decision-making and action across a range of areas where local government has the most immediate influence and control.

Why think about our food system?

What we eat and how we produce it has a huge impact on our health, environment, economy and communities. To ensure our food system can provide adequate, safe and nutritious food for all people in the future, we need to address serious challenges.

→ Economic Environment

Households in NSW spend on average **\$1036** a year on food that is wasted. Across NSW, this totals **\$2.5 billion.**¹



Between **2005** and **2007** there was a **33% increase** in the price of vegetables and **43% increase** in fruit prices due to **drought**³



The number of farms in Australia has dropped by **20,000** just in the **last decade**

→ Social Environment

2.2 million Australians live in **poverty**¹²



In **2008**, only **6%** of **Australian adults** consumed the recommended daily intake of both **fruit and vegetables**¹¹



Almost **1/4** of Australia's **disease burden** is attributable to **diet-related risk factors**¹³

→ Natural Environment

By **2025**, **1800 million people** will be living in countries or regions with **absolute water scarcity**⁵

In Australia, **Agriculture** consumes **60-70%** of our **fresh water resource**⁶



75.7% of NSW's **land use** is for **agriculture**⁷



→ Built Environment

The NSW population is expected to grow to **9.1 million people** by **2031**⁸



In **2010-2011**, over **1.2 million tonnes** of food went to **landfill** from homes and businesses across NSW. That equates to **one swimming pool every 9 hours.**⁹

A **70% increase** in **global demand for food** is predicted by **2050**¹⁰



1. NSW Environment Protection Authority (2013), Waste Less, Recycle More, Accessed online [27 September 2013]: <http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/waste/WasteLess.htm>

2. The Australian Productivity Commission Report (2005), Trends in Australian Agriculture, Access Online [1 November 2013]: http://www.pc.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/8361/agriculture.pdf

3. Quiggin, J. Drought, Climate Change and Food Prices in Australia, Australian Conservation Foundation, Melbourne, 2010.

4. NSW Department of Health (2005), Population Health Survey

5. Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (2013), Water Scarcity, Accessed online [20 September 2013]: www.fao.org/nr/water/issues/scarcity.html

6. Ibid.

7. ABS (2011), 7121.0, Agricultural Commodities, Australia 2011 – 2012, Accessed online [1 October 2013]: <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/7121.0main+features42011-12>

8. NSW EPA (2012), State of the Environment Report, Accessed online [10 September 2013]: <http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/soe/soe2012/index.htm>

9. NSW Environment Protection Authority (2013), lock cit.

10. Same as 7

11. ABS (2013), 4842.0.55.001, Overweight and Obesity in Australia: A Snapshot, Accessed Online [29 August 2013]: <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Products/36A5AA4EB83E5F69CA25789C0023DB9C?op=endocument>

12. Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS) (2012), Poverty in Australia

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Assumptions & guiding principles

The Strategy has been developed within the context of the following assumptions and guiding principles, which provide the imperative for action.

- The **current food system** faces challenges of equity, ecological sustainability, waste avoidance and management, human dietary health, and animal welfare. We must address these challenges in order to secure a resilient food future.
- The Illawarra Councils recognise that the issues impacting on regional food security and sustainability are complex, interwoven, and require an **integrated response** from food producers, community, industry, and government.
- The Illawarra Councils recognise that a **resilient local food system** is an important part of a sustainable future and a healthy community.
- The Illawarra Councils are committed to working within our capacity with our community and partners to recognise, **support and grow opportunities for sustainable, local food production** and consumption in the Illawarra.
- A **vibrant, diversified regional food culture** has the potential to deliver immediate and long-term economic, tourism, employment, health and ecological benefits to the Illawarra.
- There is a need for the food system to respond to the challenges posed by emerging issues including **peak oil** and **climate change**. Bringing producers and consumers closer together to support more sustainable ways of growing and eating is a key response to these issues both locally and globally.
- The **right to food** is a human right. Local government has a role to play in enabling access to adequate and nutritious food through our built and natural environment planning, governance, program and service delivery, and policies.
- **Food security** (the ability to access adequate, safe, nutritious and affordable food every day) is inherently related to the determinants of health: access to housing, income, education levels, employment, social inclusion, gender, and transport.

ILLAWARRA REGIONAL FOOD STRATEGY

Vision

THE ILLAWARRA REGION HAS A
**VIBRANT, SUSTAINABLE
LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM**
THAT IS RESILIENT, PROSPEROUS,
FAIR AND SECURE

IMPROVE HEALTH AND REDUCE INEQUITIES OF LOCALLY AVAILABLE FOOD

REDUCE THE NEGATIVE ECOLOGICAL IMPACTS OF THE CURRENT FOOD SYSTEM

PROVIDE LEADERSHIP TO SUPPORT A VIBRANT LOCAL FOOD ECONOMY

CELEBRATE AND GROW A REGIONAL FOOD CULTURE

SUPPORT DIVERSIFICATION AND REGIONAL FOOD SECURITY

PROTECT AGRICULTURAL AND OTHER LAND AND RETAIN FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

The Role of Council

Council alone cannot bring about the changes required to improve the health, sustainability and viability of our local food system. Council's responsibility is to act to pursue the vision and interests of our community, and provide civic leadership. Council may act in a range of roles, for example as a regulator, service provider, leader, advocate, facilitator or manager.

There are many services and programs that Council does, or may choose to, provide. However, there are also myriad issues which are outside of Council's direct

responsibility or control. Business, food producers, community, non-government organisations, academia and all levels of government have an important role to play.

The Strategy is designed around four themes, areas where Council's contributions are most effective and necessary.





Theme 1:

Building the capacity of our community

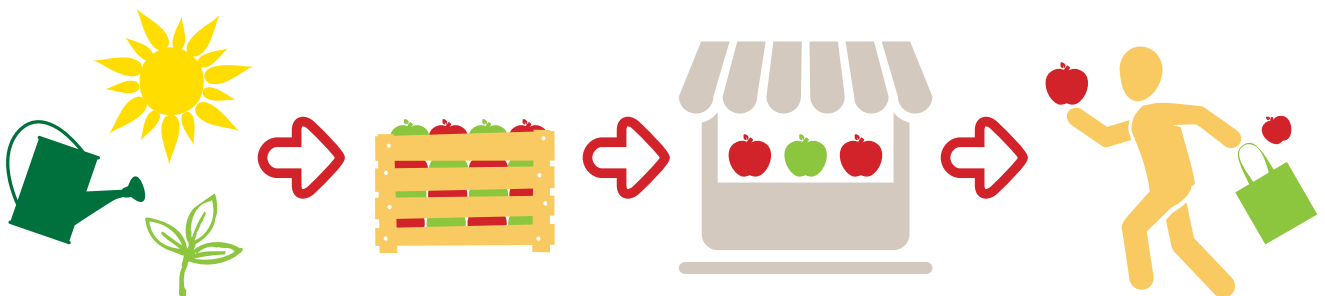
Supporting the development of skills, knowledge and inspiration to make healthier and more sustainable food accessible for all through education, program delivery, partnerships and community development. Recognising that the community may initiate change, which can be supported through creative collaboration.

Objectives

- Enable access to healthy, fair, culturally appropriate food for all people of the Illawarra
- Increase the skills, knowledge and resources to enable access to good food
- Celebrate and grow an inspiring regional food culture.

Strategies and Actions

Community education provides the skills to grow, prepare, harvest and store good food; encouraging regional events to showcase local produce; providing support and resources for school and community gardens; supporting the work of those agencies providing emergency food relief, and promoting food rescue initiatives to divert food waste from landfill; pursuing opportunities for people to learn more about healthy eating.



Theme 2: Planning, infrastructure and regulation

Council assets, infrastructure, service delivery and statutory responsibilities can be managed in such a way as to support a fair, sustainable and healthy food system.

This includes our approach to waste management, the conservation of agricultural lands, availability of Council land to support local initiatives, and urban vegetation strategies.

Objectives

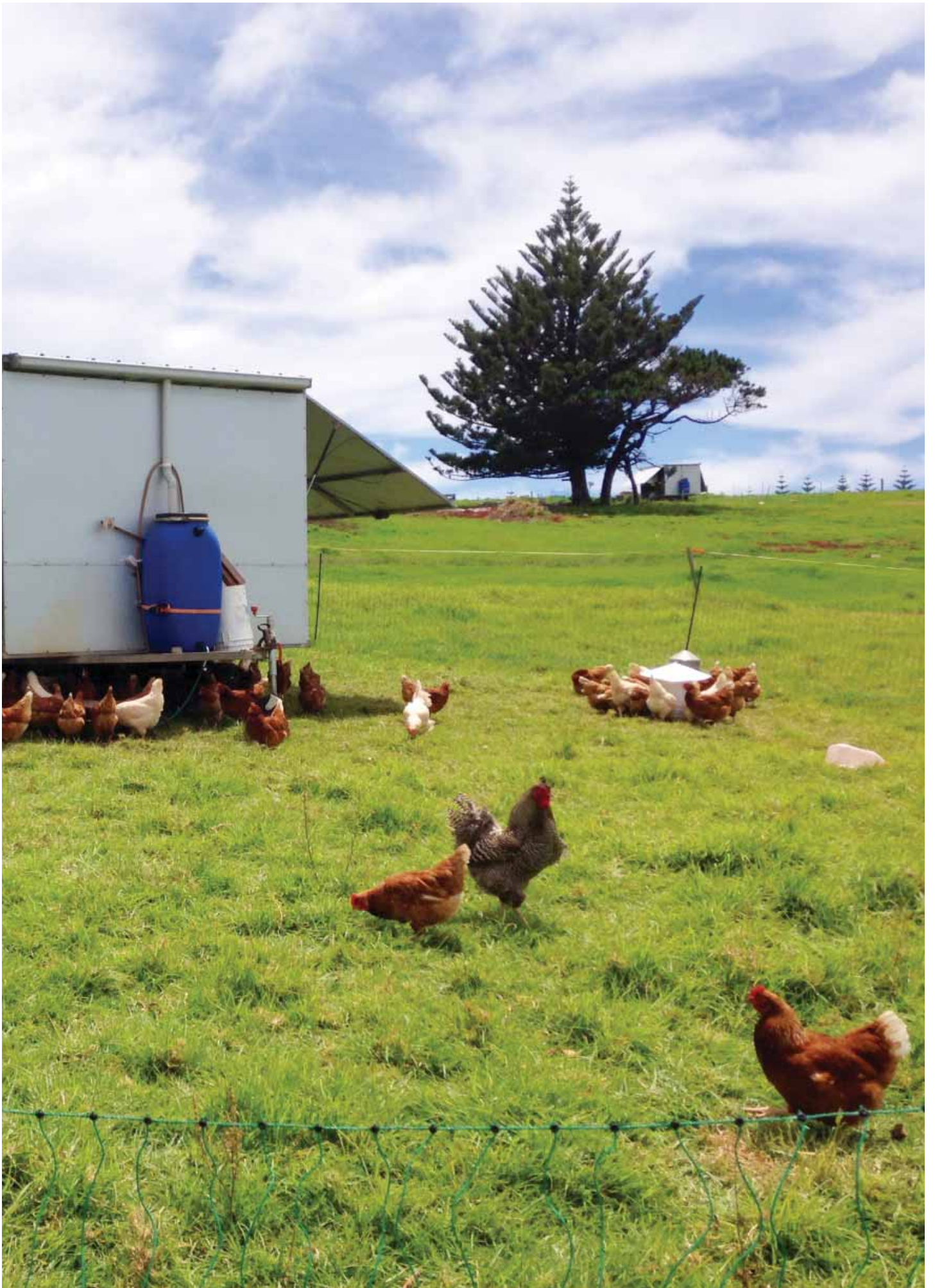
- Recognise the role of regional food production in future planning through the conservation of agricultural and other suitable lands
- Improve transport connectivity
- Review planning frameworks to improve food security, sustainability and health outcomes.

Strategies and Actions

Protect agricultural lands; conserve and make land suitable for food production available; establish targets for urban vegetation; facilitate the development of transport and distribution systems to move food within the region; audit existing infrastructure to understand the barriers to access.







Theme 3: Leadership, good governance & targeted advocacy

Council takes on a leadership role in our own services and policies, undertaking research to provide a solid evidence base whilst calling for change at all levels of government. Maintaining coherent, simple policies will enable positive initiatives to thrive.

Objectives

- Provide leadership to drive transformation
- Establish a solid evidence base for change
- Improve policy frameworks to support local food systems.

Strategies and Actions

Undertake research on the local food production and distribution story; collaborate with other agencies and stakeholders to ensure a higher priority is given to food in major planning decisions; develop and maintain simple policies to enable community and verge gardens; encourage the emergence of regional food stallholders, suppliers and outlets by supporting training and compliance with food inspection and hygiene regimes.



Theme 4:

Supporting the local food economy

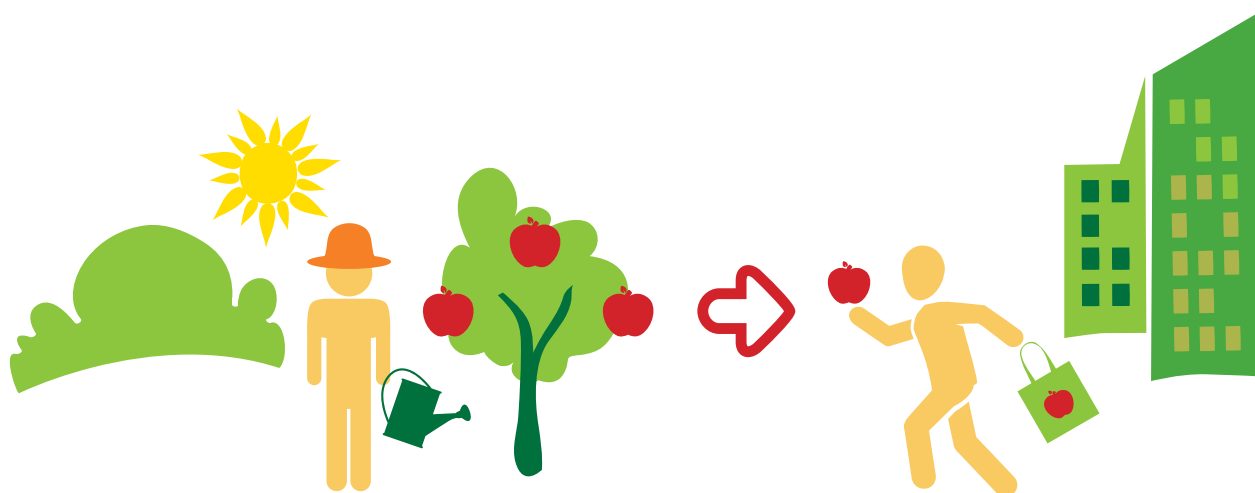
Bringing producers and consumers closer together, building partnerships to grow the diversity and capacity of the sector, and celebrating the diversity and successes of our regional food system. Finding opportunities to showcase our regional food to visitors and residents alike, and collaborating to support local employment and community initiatives.

Objectives

- Grow the local food economy's viability in the horticulture, agriculture, restaurant, retail, accommodation, service delivery and training areas
- Increase the number and capacity of local producers, distributors, outlets and access points
- Connect local producers to local consumers.

Strategies and Actions

Support the development of new and existing community-based initiatives such as farmers markets; promote regional food to consumers, the hospitality sector and institutions; provide support to improve sustainable food production practices; market the region as a food tourism destination; recognise and support the important role of our existing food producers





Strategy Overview

THE **VISION** IS FOR A VIBRANT, SUSTAINABLE LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM THAT IS RESILIENT, PROSPEROUS, FAIR AND SECURE

THE **GOAL** IS TO WORK IN PARTNERSHIP AND IN KEEPING WITH OUR COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLANS TO GUIDE ACTION AND DECISION-MAKING ACROSS FOUR KEY AREAS:

COMMUNITY CAPACITY

OBJECTIVES:

- Enable access to healthy food for all people of the Illawarra
- Increase skills, knowledge and resources
- Celebrate and grow an inspiring food culture

STRATEGIES & ACTIONS:

- Promote waste diversion, food aid and rescue
- Provide support and resources for school and community gardens
- Participate in regional food security networks
- Provide fresh drinking water in public spaces
- Increase access to culturally appropriate food
- Provide community education on sustainable food
- Encourage regional events to use local food
- Collaborate to promote healthy food and lifestyle

SUPPORTING THE LOCAL FOOD ECONOMY

OBJECTIVES:

- Grow the local food economy
- Grow the number and capacity of food producers
- Connect local producers to local consumers

STRATEGIES & ACTIONS:

- Grow our reputation as a food destination
- Facilitate access to land for emerging producers
- Provide support, training and mentoring for producers
- Support the development of community-based initiatives
- Promote regional food outlets to consumers, hospitality sector and institutions
- Provide support to improve sustainable food production practices
- Encourage value-adding and diversification

PLANNING INFRASTRUCTURE & REGULATION

OBJECTIVES:

- Conserve agricultural and other lands for food production
- Improve transport connectivity
- Review planning frameworks to improve food security, sustainability and health outcomes

STRATEGIES & ACTIONS:

- Review and provide access to Council land for food production
- Audit existing infrastructure to understand barriers to distribution and access
- Enable backyard chickens, bees
- Water harvesting and reuse
- Pursue conservation of agricultural lands and other significant fertile land
- Establish targets for urban vegetation
- Waste strategies focus on food waste avoidance

LEADERSHIP, GOVERNANCE & ADVOCACY

OBJECTIVES:

- Provide leadership to drive transformation
- Establish a solid evidence base for change
- Improve policy frameworks to support local food systems

STRATEGIES & ACTIONS:

- Council leads by example across all business areas
- Undertake research on the local production and distribution story
- Collaborate with agencies to ensure higher priority is given to present and future food needs in major planning decisions
- Directly engage developers and agencies to improve food security
- Develop simple internal policies to enable community food initiatives
- Implement planning and policy to support food security and sustainability

THE STRATEGY IS SUPPORTED BY AN **ACTION PLAN** WITH SPECIFIC PRIORITIES TO ACHIEVE THESE OBJECTIVES

ILLAWARRA REGIONAL FOOD STRATEGY

What happens next?

The Illawarra Regional Food Strategy provides the policy position and overall framework for Council's role in progressing food security and sustainability in our region. This will require strong partnerships between community, business, non-government organisations, academia and producers.

An Action Plan has been developed to identify a detailed suite of actions, including those priorities which may be implemented regionally. The Action Plan has been designed as an internal document, which will be updated annually, to inform decision-making and resource allocation as part of the partner councils' normal business planning processes.

The differences in population, community assets, demographics, land use, economic structure, community priorities, revenue base and resource levels between Kiama,

Shellharbour and Wollongong Councils will determine progress against other actions in each LGA.

With this in mind, the Action Plan has been designed to:

- benchmark the current status of activity in each LGA
- identify actions which are Regional Priorities
- describe the role of Council against each action
- enable partner councils to progress actions most relevant to their area
- nominate a timeframe for each action, and
- identify additional resources required.

Implementation & evaluation?

The Illawarra Councils' current level of activity and commitment to food security and sustainability has been benchmarked against a number of measures, and will be monitored over time.

The ambitions, strategies and actions outlined here do not necessarily require extensive resources to achieve. This Strategy offers a framework for improving the delivery of our core responsibilities, and delivering services, in such a way as to support regional food security and sustainability.

In turn, a focus on creatively working to improve outcomes in the regional food system promises to deliver significant economic, social, amenity, cultural and health benefits to our whole community.

The Strategy has been endorsed by each of the partner councils, and progress will be reviewed annually to align with the Integrated Planning and Reporting process. Staff from the partner councils will meet at least quarterly to collaborate and discuss progress.

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