

August 2021



HIGHLIGHTS FY 20 - 21

GEORGINA GUBBINS

CHAIR
FOOD AND FIBRE GREAT SOUTH COAST



The Great South Coast is going from strength to strength as we work to implement our growth strategies into 2021. It is with great pleasure that I introduce the Food and Fibre Great South Coast - Highlights FY 20-21, an update on our strategic commitment to grow and support food and fibre production in our region.

Our mission, for the Great South Coast to become Australia's most productive, innovative, and sustainable food and fibre region, continues to break significant ground as we move into the new financial year.

Growing the value of regional food and fibre in the Great South Coast and the prosperity of our community is the embodiment of who we are, and the only reason our organisation exists. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge our partners and network throughout the food and fibre supply chains and regional communities who have collaborated with us over the last year to achieve significant progress on investment and advocacy in the Great South Coast.

Our region faces significant challenges and there are some tall barriers we are striving to overcome. The determined work of Food and Fibre Great South Coast is providing a strong framework for targeted, collaborative action that positions food and fibre, as well as the region collectively, for greater prosperity and wellbeing.

We recognise our resource limitations and the excellent work being led by others at the regional, state and national levels. Our role is to foster complementary relationships, partners and occasionally lead initiatives that derive value for the Great South Coast. The hard work we all do is getting noticed by people who make decisions, and we continue to seek positive outcomes for the people and communities we serve.

I am delighted to present this FY20-21 update to you. I look forward to increased food and fibre production and prosperity in the Great South Coast, and the ensuing economic and social benefits for our entire community.





NATALIE COLLARD

EXECUTIVE OFFICER
FOOD AND FIBRE GREAT SOUTH COAST

Please enjoy this update on Food and Fibre Great South Coast's annual highlights for FY2020/21.

The dedication, determination and drive of the food and fibre community in the Great South Coast has been well and truly on show over this busy and rewarding year. Food and Fibre Great South Coast – your representative body – has made some amazing progress in that time, too.

We're creating pathways to capitalise on our competitive advantage in groundwater, striving to achieve fit-for-purpose and sustainable energy solutions to power our businesses, and showcasing the variety of rewarding careers on offer so we can access talent pools from schools, vocational training institutions and universities to fill the exciting food and fibre jobs of the future.

We run on a lean team of one, which I've found to be both a challenge and a strength. It means we're always looking for ways to engage with our stakeholders in a meaningful, ground-level way – leveraging priceless assets like relationships, experience and the intergenerational knowledge of our board and networks – to advance our strategic vision.

Our network underpins the value of the work we do. Without you and your goodwill, feedback and generous in-kind and financial partnership, we simply could not succeed. These collaborations are proof that we're on the right track.

An enormous thank you to our Board, ably led by Georgina Gubbins, connections and the people of the Great South Coast for the warm welcome you have extended to me in my first year as part of our incredible food and fibre family. My thanks to Tony Ford and Jane Young for handing me the baton to an organisation with strong foundations and goodwill.

I look forward to continuing to work with you to achieve our purpose of greater wellbeing and prosperity for all.



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We respectfully acknowledge the Elders, past, present and emerging, of the Gunditjmara and Eastern Marr People, and all traditional custodians of the lands and hinterlands in which we live and work. In our food and fibre pursuits, we are committed to continuing the 32,000 years-plus of sustainable custodianship of the Great South Coast's natural resources.

▶ ABOUT US

Food and Fibre Great South Coast Inc. (FFGSC) is the representative body for food and fibre on the Great South Coast (GSC), Victoria's largest food and fibre region by value.

We are the people, natural environment and industries of Colac-Otway Shire, Corangamite Shire, Glenelg Shire, Moyne Shire, Southern Grampians Shire, and the City of Warrnambool – collectively a population of over 105,000 people and 12,000 businesses that achieves a gross regional product of \$7 billion.

▶ Our vision

The Great South Coast is Australia's most productive, innovative, and sustainable food and fibre production region.

▶ Our purpose

To grow the value of regional food and fibre production to improve the prosperity and resilience of our local communities.

We do this by collaborating to drive regional value-add, investment and sustainability; to realise the untapped water opportunity; to nurture food and fibre careers; and to champion a positive industry image.

▶ Our approach

We strive to grow our collective regional future through:

- ▶ Open-minded collaboration
- ▶ Passionate advocacy
- ▶ Innovative and lean operations
- ▶ Transparency and integrity



BACKGROUND

Established in 2017, Food and Fibre Great South Coast began as a community council operating under the auspice of the Great South Coast Group. Supported by a one-off grant from Regional Development Victoria (RDV) and local government area (LGA) investment, the Council took measures to address the Food and Fibre Strategy and Action Plan 2015 which identified that the region needed to take urgent action to retain its position as Victoria's agricultural powerhouse.

This period saw the organisation focus on research, analysis and planning, much of which still informs our work today. However, with the expiry of the RDV grant, Council members recognised that the deep-seated nature of the challenges we were set up to address required a new, long-term strategy.

Food and Fibre Great South Coast Inc was incorporated as an association in its own right on 28 June 2019. We developed a new strategic plan, called Growing Our Regional Futures, in consultation with a wide network of food and fibre industry participants and the regional community. Launched in April 2020, the Growing Our Regional Futures plan laid out our vision, purpose and values-led approach.



OUR BOARD



Georgina Gubbins
Chair



Alistair McCosh
Deputy Chair
Chair, Nurture Food and Fibre
Careers Committee



Liz Duncan
Treasurer
Resigned May 2021



Jack Luxford
A/Treasurer
Chair, Finance and Risk
Committee



Basil Ryan
Chair, Realise the Water
Opportunity Committee



Jonathan Jenkin
Chair, Regional Investment,
Value-Add and Sustainability
Committee



Bill Millard
Great South Coast Group



Martin Clark



Michael Goldby



Oonagh Kilpatrick



Ralph Cotter
Agriculture Victoria



Marie Thornton



David Pope
Great South Coast Regional Partnership
Resigned July 2021

▶ GOVERNANCE

Food and Fibre Great South Coast knows that our stakeholders deserve transparency, accountability and good governance.

Over the last year, to ensure good governance at Food and Fibre Great South Coast, we have:

- ▶ Adopted an Acknowledgement of Country to reflect the importance of our First Nations peoples.
- ▶ Managed accounting and financial reporting in-house, giving us day to day oversight of our financial position.
- ▶ Completed outstanding and in-year Business Activity Statement (BAS) payments and reporting.
- ▶ Held our inaugural Annual General Meeting In September 2020, where we appointed three new board members from a well-received public call for nominations. New members Martin Clark, Jonathan Jenkin, Jack Luxford have hit the ground running.
- ▶ Completed board inductions for our new Directors, and a Board ice-breaker session.
- ▶ Implemented a suite of committee charters and internal risk management policies to protect, promote and work together to grow our reputation.
- ▶ Achieved dynamic organisational momentum despite a tight operating budget, small team and limited resources.
- ▶ Created a stakeholder database and issued regular communications like newsletters, social media, in-person and online direct engagements, and sharing knowledge early so others can leverage our work.
- ▶ Developed a value proposition based on the feedback of existing partners, who have committed to retain their involvement in the new financial year.

"Our partners have added enormous value to our offering and operations. We're so excited to work with new and existing funding partners towards our shared goals in the new financial year."

Georgina Gubbins
Chair, Food and Fibre Great South Coast

DRIVING REGIONAL INVESTMENT, VALUE-ADD AND SUSTAINABILITY

Lifting regional productivity, sustainability and prosperity by working together to attract resources and enable business transition to first-stage processing.

Committee: Jonathan Jenkin (Chair), Rhonda Henry, Oonagh Kilpatrick, Alistair McCosh, Karensa Menzies, Bill Millard

▶ Three phase power

We're addressing infrastructure inequality by advancing the case to upgrade single-wire earth return lines to more reliable three-phase power. As it stands, regional communities don't qualify for basic energy upgrade investments because we can't meet population density benchmarks. As we know, farms and dense populations don't go together.

We're dialling up our advocacy and efforts because we know the people of the Great South Coast deserve more than energy infrastructure from the '50s.



Primary schools should have infrastructure that supports air conditioning and modern businesses need energy capacity to innovate, create jobs and drive economic growth.

As a result of our advocacy and the 95 letters of support from our community, the Food and Fibre Great South Coast Three-phase Power Initiative has been recognised in Parliament by Victorian Energy Minister, The Hon. Lily D'Ambrosio MP.

We're confident that we've earned a place at the government table to explore new ways to deliver for our community.

"We are an innovative and forward-thinking region that cares about sustainability, job creation and best practice. We are the economic backbone of Victoria through our food and fibre success, and three phase-power will enable us to create prosperity for our region as a whole"

Bruce Knowles,
Dairy Farmer, Tyrendarra

▶ Hycel at Deakin and COALAR partnership

We've helped Hycel at Deakin University, a hydrogen energy innovation hub, secure a grant of \$50,000 from the Council on Australia Latin America Relations to partner with another global hydrogen leader, Uruguay, in piloting a new strategy for dairy transport using hydrogen in the Great South Coast.

In an increasingly competitive market, growing our farm-gate output and the many industries it supports while reducing emissions will rely on cutting-edge technology.

Hydrogen energy is getting cheaper and, through Hycel, the Great South Coast is at the forefront of hydrogen fuel cell development.

This program will deliver valuable insights into how we can use hydrogen to supercharge our productivity and, ultimately, be applicable beyond dairy to the whole food and fibre supply chain.

"Hycel is a story of cutting edge technology, new careers and a thriving community."

Alistair McCosh
Deputy Chair, FFGSC
CEO, Deakin Warrnambool

▶ Policy submissions

In FY20-21, we submitted extensive policy recommendations to Infrastructure Victoria's 30-year Infrastructure Priorities plan.

We've called on Federal Minister for Energy, the Hon Angus Taylor MP, to fix the inequality embedded within regulatory frameworks that mean regional communities miss out on critical energy upgrades.

We've also made technical policy submissions to the Australian Energy Regulator and the Victorian Government's Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) process on three-phase power.

With the people of the Great South Coast at the core of everything we do, we're always looking for opportunities to make representations to decision makers on their behalf.



Picture: ABC Ballarat

► Growing Our Regional Futures Strategy Launch

The successful launch of the Growing our Regional Futures Strategy in April, sponsored by Moyne Shire Council, Deakin University, and NAB Regional & Agribusiness, saw over seventy people come together to celebrate our future strategic direction.

We were grateful to renowned Australian sustainability advocate and successful Great South Coast producer, Mark Wootton, for providing the keynote address and to the Federal and state agricultural Ministers for joining us by video.

Stakeholders from across the supply chain, community and governments strongly endorse our bold plan for sustainable growth.



"I congratulate Food and Fibre Great South Coast for its leadership and commitment to Australian agriculture, demonstrated through the delivery of this strategic plan."

The Hon David Littleproud MP
Minister for Agriculture, Drought & Emergency Management

"Victoria's Strategy for agriculture is intrinsically aligned with the Food and Fibre Great South Coast Growing Our Regional Futures Strategy."



The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP
Minister for Regional Development & Agriculture



"This Regional Futures Strategy will capitalise on our industry strengths, further driving investment and sustainability whilst nurturing and championing the regions food and fibre."

The Hon Dan Tehan MP
Member for Wannan

"The commitment, drive and collaboration of the farming community of South West Victoria is renowned and this strategy continues that leadership tradition."



Roma Britnell MP
Member for South West Coast



"I am delighted to see Food and Fibre Great South Coast articulate the roadmap to achieve [...] a prosperous future for all living in the South West Victoria."

The Hon Libby Coker MP
Member for Corangamite

"I would like to congratulate Chair Georgina Gubbins and the Food and Fibre Great South Coast Board for creating a strategy and vision for continued prosperity of the Great South Coast."



Stuart Grimley MP
Member for Western Victoria



"The sector's strong performance despite [...] the loss of important international export markets demonstrates the essential resilience of regional Victoria, and I am confident that this strategy will help capitalise on the assets and abilities of the industry"

Beverley McArthur MLC
Member for Western Victoria Region

"Food and Fibre Great South Coast provides a regional, coordinated voice across five shires, helping to drive change for economic growth and support our farmers."



Councillor Daniel Meade
Mayor of Moyne Shire



"NAB Regional and Agribusiness is committed to the sustainable growth of industry in the Great South Coast. As Australia's largest business bank we are proud to be promoting the launch of this plan to Grow Our Regional Futures together."

Jack Luxford
NAB Agribusiness Manager & FFGSC Treasurer

"Only through advocating with a coordinated, regional voice that represents every sector and supply chain, can we influence positive policy change in power, water and workforce attraction, which currently stand as barriers to realising the full potential of food and fibre production in our region."



Councillor Anita Rank
Chair, Great South Coast Group
Mayor of Glenelg Shire



"Deakin University welcomes the strategic roadmap for the Food and Fibre sector in the Great South Coast. Deakin recognises the significance and strength of this sector in the Great South Coast and the great opportunities it has."

Grant Sutherland
CEO Deakin South West Victoria

▶ REALISE THE WATER OPPORTUNITY

Collaboratively capture the full potential of the Great South Coast's water resource through sustainable management of ground and surface water, and effective drainage systems.

Committee: Basil Ryan (Chair), Bruce Vallance, Hugh Christie, Chris Solum, Andrew Jeffers, Ralph Cotter, Jack Luxford

Our research shows increased productivity worth up to \$54 million can be achieved by increasing groundwater usage by just 10 per cent.

Our goal is to seek a mutual understanding of the need to raise awareness of groundwater in all government, industry and community bodies through water efficiency improvements, regulatory adjustments and sustainable management practices. We understand that to attract the large scale, high value food and fibre investment required to secure our long-term regional prosperity, we need to strengthen industry, government and market understanding of groundwater availability, risks and opportunities.



▶ **Great South Coast**

Sustainable Water

Roundtable

In June 2020, we held a high-level roundtable meeting with the Victorian government, business leaders and local government officials to discuss water opportunities in the Great South Coast.

Attended by Parliamentary Secretary for Water, Harriet Shing MP, Department of Land, Water, Environment and Planning (DELWP) officials, and Food and Fibre Great South Coast senior water stakeholders including producers, local government CEOs and water agency leaders, the roundtable achieved a united regional approach to resource management.

We secured all of our asks, including the establishment of a formal, two-year partnership featuring a quarterly water dialogue between Food and Fibre Great South Coast and DELWP. The department also agreed to give serious consideration to policy innovation opportunities that we are developing and a region-specific Sustainable Water Statement to inform our joint approach to water for the next decade.

▶ **Sustainable Water**

Statement

In consultation with all of our key water stakeholders, we have agreed the text of a sustainable water statement for the Great South Coast. This statement will be launched in the new financial year and sets out our mutual vision and values for sustainable water use in the region.

▶ **Food and Fibre Great South Coast & Southern Rural Water**

We finalised a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Southern Rural Water (SRW). This formal partnership will bring a new perspective and significant resources to harness all the opportunities associated with the Great South Coast's water resources.

We're now close to finalising a groundwater brochure with SRW to build water literacy and promote water education and advocacy in the region. While we have yet to formally launch the MOU, we've been operating under its framework for some months and the new partnership has already strengthened as a result.

NURTURE FOOD AND FIBRE CAREERS

Attract talented people to food and fibre by promoting our diverse range of opportunities, outlining clearer career pathways and supporting more integrated learning.

Committee: Alistair McCosh (Chair), Martin Clark, Jonathan Jenkin, Oonagh Kilpatrick, Marie Thornton, David Clift, Daniel Finn, John Flett, Daker Pern, Andrea Vallance, Brad Collins

Food and fibre accounts for 21.6 per cent of jobs in our region. Our research shows that by 2035, our jobs market will have expanded by 30 per cent thanks to sustained growth in the sector.

Of these new jobs – some of which don't exist yet – we estimate that 39 per cent will require a vocational qualification and 19 per cent will require a university degree.

We need to work to ensure our image reflects the diverse and rewarding career opportunities of the food and fibre industry. Our continued transition to the innovation economy means that jobs are becoming available in labs and offices as much as in the great outdoors, transport cabins, sales and food processing.

Food and Fibre Great South Coast promotes every aspect of working in our region, from training and grants to health and safety. This also means supporting producers to transition out of their business when the time comes without sacrificing growth.

With over 11,000 independent food and fibre businesses in the Great South Coast, many owned and operated by families, we have a responsibility to ensure they are well positioned to navigate the present and prosper in the future.



► Succession Planning Event

Food and Fibre Great South Coast invested in the ongoing success of the region at the inaugural Succession Planning Event held in April 2021. The event was proudly supported by key partners WestVic Dairy, Sinclair Wilson, Maddens Lawyers, and Deakin University, Warrnambool.

Through an interactive panel discussion with succession planning experts Basil Brock, Fiona Madden and Mike Stephens as well as an industry perspective from Dixie dairy farmer Brad Collins, guests walked away with a new understanding of the value that succession planning brings to food and fibre businesses and the importance of seeking professional advice early.

"We know that our future prosperity depends on the individual success of the food and fibre businesses in our region. That's why we're highlighting the importance of Succession Planning to ensure individuals and businesses future-ready."

Alistair McCosh
Chair, Nurture Food and Fibre Careers Committee

► Australian School Curriculum Concept

We've developed a concept for affordable and scalable food and fibre content to be taught in schools, boosting agricultural literacy across the country. Now, we're actively working with funding partners towards creating and sharing this important content.

We understand that connecting students to food and fibre content in the classroom pays dividends both now and into the future. In cultivating a better understanding of food and fibre, we inspire students to consider career opportunities in the Great South Coast's exciting food and fibre industry.



▶ **Careers Advisory Panel concept development**

Young people need to know what's out here for them in the Great South Coast region of south-west Victoria.

We've developed a program – the Careers Advisory Panel – that will leverage our skilled and experienced network to help share their stories and insight, inspiring students and graduates to choose a food and fibre career.

The Careers Advisory Panel will be made up of a diverse mix of regional food and fibre representatives who will be trained and supported to share their stories.

The objectives of this program are threefold:

- ▶ Raise the food and fibre sector's profile and diverse offerings with younger people.
- ▶ Add value to new and existing Great South Coast careers-related programs.
- ▶ Connect training providers, teachers and students to a vibrant network of food and fibre representatives that can enrich existing program delivery.

▶ **Targeted outreach activity**

Our outreach initiatives take many forms and are all about reaching people where they are. For example, we've participated in field days, podcasts and online activities with our community.

Over the course of the last financial year, we've presented at the Deakin University and SW Tafe Agribusiness Careers Program, delivered a well-received social media showcase to celebrate Rural Women's Day and partnered with Warrnambool City Council and Beanstalk to deliver The Ideas Place – an exciting innovation accelerator showcase for regional food and fibre businesses.

We're constantly exploring ways to maximise our presence in careers contexts, leveraging our people and creativity to put food and fibre front of mind for young people.



▶ CHAMPION FOOD AND FIBRE ADVOCACY

Grow the awareness of the GSC's food and fibre regional importance, professionalism, and achievements, positively influence food and fibre policy outcomes by advocating with a unified voice for our sector's supply chains and improve internal and external communication.

Across our wide range of events and policy driven engagement, like talking about agricultural careers in our community and hosting issues-led roundtables with regional leaders and government, we've made advocacy an intrinsic part of what we do.

We understand good advocacy has two components – keeping you, our network, in the loop, and giving our region an effective voice that fast-tracks the results we need to achieve.

Our collaborative mindset means we're also advocating on behalf of others in our region. We've sent the equivalent of one letter of support a month to strengthen the case for investment in programs across our region that are led by other organisations. This year, we completed the final year of a three-year investment in Leadership Great South Coast, so we can empower and up-skill leaders across our region and across all sectors.



▶ High-level decision maker engagement

We regularly engage with government, industry and community leaders to advance the position of the food and fibre industry in our region.

We've met with Federal and state Ministers in key portfolios such as primary industries, energy and water.

In May, our Chair attended a Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade function for members of the Consular and Diplomatic Corps on a tour of the Great South Coast region.



▶ Enhance internal and external communication

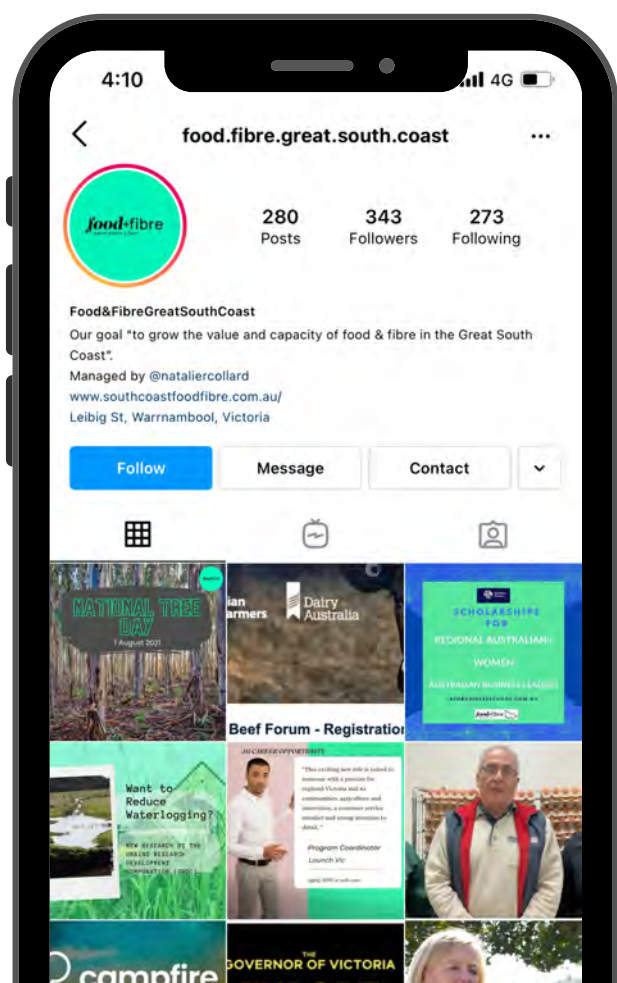
We keep our stakeholders up to date with information and progress on key projects and issues management with in person, online, formal and informal meetings held regularly.

We have delivered on our commitment to keep our stakeholders updated through our Stakeholder Update, which is delivered directly to email inboxes and made available on our website.

We've successfully achieved a voice for our issues and people in traditional media – with regular appearances in local newspapers across the region, and on local and national radio. We also had our key people profiled on podcasts shared nationally in the food and fibre community.

► Social media campaigns

100% Great South Coast
 AgCareers
 AgDayAu – National Agriculture Day
 Farm Safety Week
 Federal Budget Fast-Take analysis
 GetAmongstIt Ambassadors
 Campaign#
 International Rural Women's Day
 Mother's Day
 NAIDOC Week
 National Agriculture Day
 National Volunteer Week
 Pride Week
 Reconciliation Week
 Rural Women's Leadership and
 Mentoring Programs
 Summer Means Seafood
 Sheep Innovation Day
 Talking Three-phase Power
 Victorian Budget 2021
 World Environment Day
 World Milk Day





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