



Annual Highlights

FY 2022 - 2023
September 2023





Chair's Report

Georgina Gubbins

Chair

Food and Fibre Great South Coast

I am delighted to present you Food and Fibre Great South Coast's Annual Highlights Report for the 2022-2023 year, an update on our strategic priorities and ambitions for the future. As Chair of this strategically important organisation for many years, I am filled with a sense of pride and gratitude for the outstanding work that has been accomplished.

Firstly, I would like to highlight the tremendous progress that has been made to safeguard the prosperity of food and fibre industries in Victoria's South Coast region. Our team of voluntary board and community members, one employee and occasional contractors, have worked tirelessly to represent our food and fibre industry, supported by the council investments, community donations and project funds we've received.

From delivering careers programs across the region, developing leading-edge and credible policy, to inspirational events and networking opportunities, FFGSC has been instrumental in building a strong and collaborative community of local industry professionals. This has only strengthened our government relations and advocacy effectiveness, while we continue to drive forward innovations for the region.

As someone who has always lived in the region, I am particularly proud to connect local job seekers to rewarding and dynamic careers in food and fibre right here where they already live. An industry that too often goes misunderstood, even in our own community. We remain driven by the knowledge that growing this passionate workforce will further the prosperity of each member of the Great South Coast region, given our deep reliance and connection to the industry.

It is on this note, that I thank our outgoing CEO Natalie Collard for her unwavering leadership these past three years. A true test of any CEO is whether they leave the organisation in a better position than which they found it. Under Natalie's eye, we have built a credible reputation demonstrated by the strong engagement we receive from political leaders, our events attracting over 100 attendees each time, and our social media following lifting by 700 percent; and the recognition of how a thriving fibre and food industry is instrumental to the whole community. Our community is listening, and our key stakeholders are collaborating. On behalf of the Board, I wish Natalie all the best, knowing she is a lifelong friend for the Great South Coast and Southwest Victoria.

While we are very much still a start-up working on long term sustainability, I depart from my role of Chair Food and Fibre Great South Coast knowing that the organisation is in excellent hands. I look forward to seeing the many programs – both those in progress and those in planning – bear fruit for our community as FFGSC builds on the strong foundations now in place.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to everyone who has supported me and our organisation over the past years, particularly our volunteer board and committee members who contribute so generously. Whether you have volunteered your time, donated to our cause or simply spread the word, your contribution has been invaluable. The organisation would not be what it is without you.

As I depart my role as Chair after six years of tenure, I know that I speak on behalf of the board when I say that together FFGSC will indeed build a brighter and more sustainable future for the Great South Coast community, tomorrow and the days to follow.

CEO's Report



Natalie Collard

CEO

Food and Fibre Great South Coast

After three rewarding years at Food and Fibre Great South Coast, I am deeply proud of what we've built together and to witness the innovations and partnerships that we are now starting to see bear fruit. Upon joining FFGSC, I was motivated by the sheer calibre of local industry and the collective appetite to enact our shared vision for lasting prosperity across southwest Victoria. It is important to me to acknowledge our outgoing Chair, Georgina Gubbins, who took over the reins of a fledgling organisation fighting for its future. She has led by example. Her integrity, tenacity and intellectual capacity created an environment where despite our lean financial position, FFGSC has continually attracted outstanding partners, senior government engagement and board members of a similar calibre and diverse skillset.

Today, I am immensely proud to say that together, we have taken great steps towards delivering on greater collaboration and prosperity for the region. From developing a strategic plan that aligns seamlessly with the platforms of local Councils and regional bodies, to fostering meaningful connections with our community and policy makers, we have walked a path that is unmistakably ambitious and inclusive.

Over the last financial year, we brought together members of the community, government and industry leaders at multiple events to build a sustainable future; showcased local businesses doing great things; and launched a Sustainability Snapshot for the region. High-trust strategic relationships with key partners are becoming our hallmark. This is a key enabler to growing our organisation's value proposition and increasing recognition as an important regional partner to secure and deliver locally relevant outcomes and impact.

Further to Georgina's comments, we have advanced the Careers Advisory Panel, which has reached over 1300 students and jobseekers, and with Board support, we've taken significant steps towards realising our cutting-edge 18-Point Plan for Water Policy Reform. We've engendered stakeholder and government commitments for 16 out of 18 points to unlock the region's \$40M water opportunity.

Most importantly of all, we have fostered valuable connections with people who all have one thing in common: a genuine desire to see the sustainable growth and prosperity of Southwest Victoria. These relationships extend well beyond our organisation and are sparking initiatives like the Food and Fibre Careers Tasting Trail. Witnessing the impact of these relationships reflects the meaningful teamwork and cooperation that so deeply underpins our core values and vision at FFGSC.

As we spread our vision for the region and spearhead collaboration it's no surprise that our engagement, reach and meaningful impact is growing.

It's with gratitude that I prepare to step down from my time as CEO. Working alongside our passionate volunteers, dedicated board members, and committed stakeholders has been a privilege and professionally fulfilling. I particularly extend my heartfelt gratitude to FFGSC's volunteer Board of Directors, and to Chair Georgina Gubbins for her unwavering guidance and friendship throughout.

FFGSC is a lean, high-output organisation drawing on the incredible expertise of our Board and industry peers. With this leadership and rich network, I leave knowing the future for Food and Fibre Great South Coast holds even greater promise.



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Investment and Sustainability



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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

Who we are

Food and Fibre Great South Coast is the representative body for food and fibre production businesses and their vast supply-chains in beautiful South West Victoria.

South West Victoria is Australia's top agricultural production region, delivering over \$4.6 billion in output annually. The food and fibre sector is also the region's largest, contributing 60% of the region's GRP and 21.6% of all jobs.

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

Strategic priorities

- ▶ Drive Regional Value-Add, Investment and Sustainability
- ▶ Realise the Water Opportunity
- ▶ Nurture Food and Fibre Careers
- ▶ Champion Food and Fibre Advocacy





THANK YOU TO OUR FY22-23 PARTNERS AND SPONSORS



Westpac Agribusiness



**Corangamite Shire
Council**



Glenelg Shire Council



Moyne Shire Council



**Southern Grampians Shire
Council**



**Warrnambool City
Council**



**SouthWest Victoria
Alliance**



REDEI



National Landcare Program



The A.L. Lane Foundation



**Corangamite Catchment
Management Authority**



**Glenelg Hopkins Catchment
Management Authority**



Deakin University



The Midfield Group



Powercor



Southern Rural Water



Wannon Water



DemoDAIRY Foundation



**South West Community
Foundation**

Gwen & Edna Jones Foundation

Thomas O'Toole Foundation

Parkinson Family Trust

Numeralla Dairy Co.

Eirenclore Farms

Radnor Properties Pty Ltd

Freedom Dairying Pty Ltd

B & A Vallance

H & O Kilpatrick

Food and Fibre Great South Coast is a lean, high-impact organisation powered by the generous support of our community and partners.

Whether you have volunteered your time, donated to our cause or partnered with us on innovative programs and key events, your contribution has been invaluable.



Our Board



Georgina Gubbins
Chair



Brett Davis
SouthWest Victoria Alliance



Martin Clark
Deputy Chair



Jack Luxford



Oonagh Kilpatrick
Deputy Chair



Jamie Pepper



Rhonda Henry GAICD
*Treasurer & Chair, Finance
and Risk Committee*



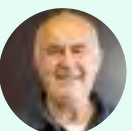
Jonathan Jenkin



Ralph Cotter
Agriculture Victoria



Dr. Anna Carrucan
(until August 2023)



John Cutler
(until March 2023)

Donate to Food and Fibre Great South Coast



Invest in regional futures

Whether it's attracting our future workforce and creating a positive industry image, leveraging the opportunity of 400 new jobs, a \$40m boost to the regional economy or \$21.7m in increased household income through sustainable water management, Food and Fibre Great South Coast is making significant headway to securing our region's future.

What you witness at FFGSC events, in the media, and the value it brings to our region is the result of our resourcefulness. We operate on a lean budget, adopting a small business ethos and always striving to extract the utmost value from every hard-earned dollar.

In partnership with South West Community Foundation (SWCF), FFGSC launched a community giving campaign encouraging our food and fibre community to keep their tax dollars local by investing in the future sustainability and wellbeing of our region.

The confidence and support we received raising over \$29,500 for our cause over the financial year is remarkable. The largest single donation was \$5,162.50, the smallest \$5 and we received as many as eight donations in a single day. This community support is encouraging and is a reminder that every dollar quickly adds up.

We'd also like to thank our Board, volunteers and the community for supporting our community sausage sizzle at Bunnings Warrnambool on 11 March 2023. This was a huge success, and we appreciate the support that Bunnings continue to offer local and regional groups like us.

We're now asking our community to build on this success by keeping your tax dollars local and making a regular tax-deductible donation that's meaningful to you. Our goal is 1000 contributions of \$200 or more per year. With the continued support from our Council partners, this collective goal will make us sustainable and ensure that we achieve greater local impact in the years to come.

With your generous support, we are working to move from a year-to-year financial proposition towards a steadfast organisation driving regional prosperity and wellbeing each and every year.

"If you can, I would encourage you to set up a regular, tax-deductible donation to Food and Fibre Great South Coast. You can select which strategic priority to direct your donation or choose to fund our organisation as a whole. We need local support to continue our vital work and are grateful for your help in growing the future of our region."

Ralph Cotter
Board Member,
Food and Fibre Great South Coast

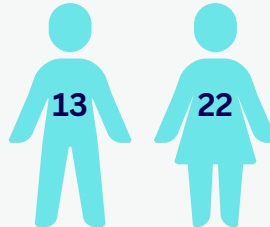


Donation Report

\$29,502 DONATED

36

individual donors



In FY22-23, \$29,502 was generously donated to Food & Fibre Great South Coast by 36 individual donors



Average donation: \$602.36

Smallest single donation: \$5.16

Largest single donation: \$5162.50

Largest donor contributed total of: \$11,357.50

Keep up your great work!

Well done on the outcomes FFGSC are realising. It never goes without notice or appreciation

Such a fantastic organisation and so worthy of support

Huge congrats on the great work



First Choice Donation Direction

RVIS

\$13,475.73

RWO

\$536.90

NFFC

\$6629.80

CFFA (all)

\$8873.00

Ready to make a tax-deductible donation? Scan here:





Drive Regional Value-Add, Investment & Sustainability

The Great South Coast has been recognised as Australia's largest agricultural production region by value – responsible for over \$4.6 billion in output over the 2020-2021 period. The economic multiplier effect of major food and fibre industries for other sectors in the Great South Coast is 1.84, and 6.06 for job creation, meaning when food and fibre thrives, the whole region thrives.

With this in mind, Food and Fibre Great South Coast is focused on driving regional wellbeing and prosperity by fostering value-add, investment and sustainability in the region. Through meaningful advocacy, consensus-building and collaborative strategic policy development, we remain committed to building on these powerful enablers for our sector.

Committee



Dr. Karenza Menzies
Chair



Jonathan Jenkin



Rhonda Henry



Dr. Anna Carrucan



Oonagh Kilpatrick



Georgina Gubbins
Observer



"South West Victoria remains not only Australia's top agricultural production region, but also a leader in Victoria's renewable energy transition. The Victorian government is working to support the efforts of everyone in this region."

Hon Lily D'Ambrosio MP
Minister for Climate Action, Energy and Resources
and Minister for the State Electricity Commission



Drive Regional Value-Add, Investment & Sustainability

Sustainable Energy Forum

19 July 2023
Warrnambool

For the second year running, Food and Fibre Great South Coast hosted our annual Great South Coast Sustainable Energy Forum at Deakin University Warrnambool. With the support of key partners, the forum once again brought together over 140 food and fibre, government, industry, and community members to hear the latest on real climate action in the sector.

Boasting an extensive program, the forum featured everything from on farm sustainability and hydrogen-powered transport, through to recycling of agricultural waste streams that profiled regional leadership to drive climate action through sustainable, innovative and industry-led endeavours.

Speaking at the event, Andrew Bailey General Manager (Strategy & Customer Group) at Powercor, said, “Proudly partnering with Food & Fibre Great South Coast is a meaningful way we can work to promote sustainable energy solutions that power homes and businesses in our communities”.

Along with Powercor, presenters featured Max Coulthard from event partner, REDEI Renewable Energy Solutions alongside Hycel's Adam Fletcher, Ian Bail from Wannon Water and Kelly Wickham representing Agriculture Victoria.



Local innovator Elisha Nettleton shared the new developments of their Hamilton-based company, Sustainable Plastic Solutions, that uses leading technology to recycle agricultural plastic waste. Notably, Elisha and her business partner attended last year's Energy Forum where they established valuable business connections to strengthen the organisation's offering.

While the forum profiled emerging developments that are spearheading climate action across the food and fibre industry Australia-wide, the conversation focused on key initiatives making a positive impact across the Great South Coast and Southwest community. FFGSC provided important updates on advocacy for regional energy equity and three-phase power upgrades and launched the first **Sustainability Snapshot** to spotlight the rigorous sustainability targets across the local food and fibre sector.

FFGSC extends our thanks to Platinum Partner Powercor, partner Iberdrola Australia, along with Moyne Shire Council, and REDEI Enterprises for their support and generous contributions to this important annual event.





Drive Regional Value-Add, Investment & Sustainability

“Powercor are committed to sustainably powering our state. Proudly partnering with Food & Fibre Great South Coast is a meaningful way we can work to promote sustainable energy solutions that power homes and businesses in our communities.”

Andrew Bailey
General Manager (Strategy & Customer Group)
Powercor



“It has been inspiring to see the collaboration and leadership on show at the Sustainable Energy Forum, with a shared drive for sustainable energy in the Great South Coast region. Iberdrola’s participation in the forum is part of our dedication to creating long-term solutions to the energy crisis.”



Patrick Deery
Head of C&I Business Customers
Iberdrola Australia

“As representatives of the top agricultural production region in Australia, Food and Fibre Great South Coast is serious about promoting long-term, meaningful and coordinated climate action. That means creating opportunities to come together and build consensus around the important issues we face right now, like a fair transition to sustainable energy consumption and production as well as ensuring no member of our community is left behind.”

Georgina Gubbins
Chair
Food and Fibre Great South Coast





Drive Regional Value-Add, Investment & Sustainability

Sustainability Snapshot

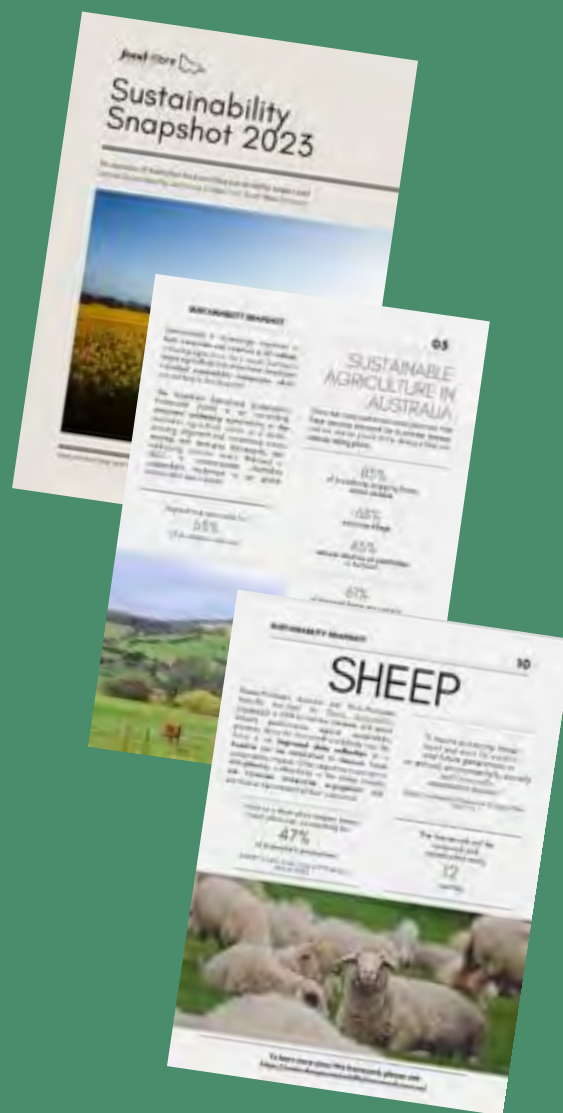
FFGSC was proud to launch the first Great South Coast Sustainability Snapshot at our annual Sustainable Energy Forum July 2023. Designed to build transparency and accountability around the sector's efforts to tackle climate change, this Australian first cross-industry snapshot provides an overview of local food and fibre sector activity against leading sustainability frameworks.

It details progress across core commodity areas including beef production, dairy, horticulture, wine and forestry. Integrated with local case studies, the Snapshot highlights the remarkable efforts of local farmers to adopt emerging sustainable practices and take meaningful steps to reduce their climate footprint in tangible ways. Importantly it highlights and signposts to each industry sustainability framework and illustrates how they come to fruition at the regional grass roots level.

Shared with key industry stakeholders and government bodies, the Sustainability Snapshot strengthens trust and confidence in our sector by demonstrating our public commitment to tackling climate change and embracing new models of working through all we do.

Too often these local efforts and investments into sustainable practice go unseen and poorly recognised for the impact that they collectively have. By capturing the collective impact together and breaking this down across key commodities we hope this continues to celebrate the transition to sustainable food and fibre long term.

Our intention is to revisit and update this snapshot as initiatives and actions continue to develop.



Scan here to read and
share the Sustainability
Snapshot:





Drive Regional Value-Add, Investment & Sustainability

“The Great South Coast region is an excellent example of how sustainable agriculture contributes to the delivery of strong economic and social benefits and positive environmental outcomes.”

**Hon. Gayle Tierney MP
Minister for Agriculture**



“Sustainability is the key word at the Forum. There is a collective desire by all to actively make some differences, share it with the region and beyond, and start to push to make some real solutions.”

**Adam Fletcher
Program Manager
Hycel Technology Hub**





Drive Regional Value-Add, Investment & Sustainability

Three-Phase Power Upgrades

Food and Fibre Great South Coast continues to strongly advocate for three-phase power in South West Victoria through targeted government and industry engagement, and involvement in the launch and ongoing work of the newly established Regional Alliance for Energy Equality.

South West Victoria holds some of Australia's most rural and remote communities, which are home to some of Australia's most productive agriculture businesses. However, federal regulations that disadvantage regional Australia are getting in the way of much-needed three-phase power upgrades, leaving over \$2M in additional economic value on the table.

As part of ongoing efforts to unlock this potential, FFGSC has made multiple government submissions including those to Infrastructure Victoria, the Australian Energy Regulator, the Victorian Government Renewable Energy Zones, and corresponded directly with responsible Ministers regarding much needed three-phase upgrades and local eligibility to 21st century energy access.

Further to these efforts, we continue to work collaboratively with South West Victoria Alliance, Powercor, and the community to drive our action plan for reliable and affordable energy forward. FFGSC also supported the launch and ongoing agenda of the recently formed Regional Alliance for Energy Equality with a shared view to address the AER's outdated methodology to bring about much needed energy improvements.

This remains an important issue for the local economy and community. 130 customers in Tyrendarra, Strathdownie, Cape Bridgewater and Gorae West experience unreliable, insecure and inadequate power supply because of their connection to less than 100 kilometres of single-wire earth return lines.

Upgrading the 100km of outdated single-wire-earth return line in Southwest Victorian towns is an urgent priority. Without access to reliable, high-quality three-phase power, rural businesses are at a competitive disadvantage in the global high-tech market, schools cannot run efficient air conditioning and sports grounds cannot guarantee basic safety amenities like night lighting. Research shows that the value of businesses and communities in Southwest Victoria to benefit from reliable, high-quality energy access is about \$2M per year, at an initial capital investment of \$11M.

Three-step Plan

Food and Fibre Great South Coast, together with the South West Victoria Alliance, Powercor and backed by a growing number of community members, has a three step plan to fix the AER's framework:

- 1 | Ensure a minimum threshold for energy service quality, regardless of where you live.
- 2 | Account for social and economic context during all infrastructure proposal evaluations.
- 3 | Give regional Australia a voice on the AER Consumer Challenge Panel, which advocates within the regulator for better reforms from a customer point of view.

In partnership with the Regional Alliance for Energy Equality, we are calling for:

- 1 | A new methodology for calculating the 'net economic benefit' of energy to reflect social and economic value.
- 2 | Establishing an equivalent to a Universal Service Obligation for electricity that defines a minimum acceptable standard of power supplies and quality, to ensure energy equity across regional and urban communities nationally.

"Making these upgrades will have huge benefits for our whole region and not just the agriculture sector. These upgrades are essential to ensure energy generated by renewable energy projects can actually be fed into the grid and be used in homes."



Roma Britnell MP
Member for South West Coast



Drive Regional Value-Add, Investment & Sustainability

Feed 365 Drought Resilience Project

We are proud to have engaged with a forward-thinking coalition led by the Centre for Rural and Regional Futures (CERFF), various Australian universities and Food and Fibre Gippsland to drive forward long-term trials of drought-resilient farming practices.

We have applied to the Future Drought Fund for \$8M over five to six years to provide feed for 365 days per year. The project, Feed 365, explores the potential of diverse pasture mixes to enhance soil moisture and feed biomass. This initiative is earmarked to significantly extend farmer self-sufficiency in feed production for grazing properties.

This innovative and much-needed solution will support farmers in developing better feeding methods for drought adaptation and climate change in both a sustainable and profitable manner. We look forward to progressing this project funding over the coming year to support farmers to future-proof their properties and businesses for a more resilient and sustainable future.

Renewable Energy as a Service (REaaS) Dairy Pilot Project

Food and Fibre Great South Coast, in partnership with leading Australian-owned technology companies and Food and Fibre Gippsland, has helped design and submit a submission for an \$11.5M pilot project for solar battery energy storage systems that is estimated to reduce CO2 by 2,800 tons annually in a cost-effective and profitable manner.

Working with REDEI Renewable Energy Solutions (REDEI) and Social Enterprises Asset Management (SEAM), the Renewable Energy as a Service (REaaS) project is designed specifically to provide food and fibre industry appropriate technology and services for renewable energy accessibility in remote and regional contexts, starting in the dairy context.

With FFGSC securing \$4M in principle from Ampyr Energy and the Sustainable Australia Fund, the coalition are waiting on a \$7M commitment from wider industry and government sources to commence this as early as possible. With key industry consultation, the project has the backing 20 supply chain participants, with individual letters of support, and a list of farmers ready to participate.

Upon funding, the project will provide 30 Victorian dairy farms over two years with Australian-manufactured solar Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) that are designed to be fully automated, remotely monitored and maintained for increased farming capacity. While ultimately a cost-effective energy solution is anticipated, the pilot itself will ensure that these batteries are provided to the farms at no upfront cost.

Along with estimating a remarkable decrease in annual greenhouse gas emissions, the project also aims to improve on-farm energy reliability, significantly lower on-farm operational expenses and reinforce the environmental and economic sustainability of vital Victorian food production enterprises. Designed and manufactured in Australia, it will also directly create 15 FTE jobs and enhance local communities by leveraging the dairy sector's economic sustainability and influence.



Drive Regional Value-Add, Investment & Sustainability

Rethinking Methane from Animal Agriculture with Dr. Frank Mitloehner

10 February 2023
Warrnambool

Early in 2023, we were delighted to host Dr. Frank Mitloehner at our Rethinking Methane from Animal Agriculture event. Dr. Mitloehner, a Professor in the Department of Animal Science at the University of California, Davis, specialising in measurement and mitigation of airborne pollutants from livestock production. Attended by over 120 community members, Dr. Mitloehner presented a thought provoking discussion about the role of ruminants in the environment.

Cam Nicholson, Consultant and Director of Nicon Rural Services, and Paul Tyson, Regional Climate Adaptation Lead, Dairy Australia provided local expertise and context to the discussion.

The event was delivered in partnership with Grassland Society of Southern Australia & Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program, the Midfield Group, Dairy Australia/WestVic Dairy, and Wannon Branch of the United Dairyfarmers of Victoria, Victorian Farmers Federation.

The event, featuring informative presentations and an in-depth panel discussion, successfully enhanced community comprehension of the role of ruminants in agriculture and the environment, better understanding of sustainability in agriculture, and raised awareness of the impact of methane emissions. It fostered connections between agricultural organisations, community members, and the food and fibre sector, highlighted our shared goals, and showcased collaborative efforts between FFGSC and the event partners.



Peter Furphy
Area Manager
Terragen Biotech

"Dr Mitloehner hosted a cutting-edge discussion on the ways in which we measure methane emissions, greenhouse gasses, and the importance of ruminant animals in the carbon loop. It was great to fly the Terragen flag and a huge amount of credit goes to all sponsors who made the event possible."





Realise the Water Opportunity

Committee



Georgina Gubbins
Chair



Bruce Vallance



Dr. Anna Carrucan



Peter Delahunty



Chris Solum



Jack Luxford



Andrew Jeffers



Bryce Morden



Martin Knowles

With the Great South Coast enjoying reliable rainfall and abundant groundwater supplies, our region understands the true value of sustainable and effective water management for a healthy environment, prosperous economy and thriving communities.

While this water access underpins the vitality of our region, significant economic opportunities remain through smarter water use. Although 100 per cent of the region's water is allocated, less than 50 per cent of this is extracted and leveraged.

These under-utilised groundwater assets represent a significant regional economic opportunity to further grow the value of our local food and fibre sector. This is why Food and Fibre Great South Coast is committed to realising a 10 per cent per annum increase in groundwater use to unlock this potential and bring about an additional \$40M per year across the regional economy.

We also continue to advocate for increased and sustainable access to the Dilwyn Acquifer, which alone holds the potential to generate an additional \$54M annually. Drawing on our economic forecasts, these benefits accrue to our whole community in jobs and amenity and allow us to operate well within the conservative allocation of water to producers without compromising the environmental allocation.

This work coincides with our ongoing commitment to prioritise environmental, cultural (traditional owners), recreational and then productive (agricultural) water use. We know that our region has sufficient water resources for all purposes and work to honour that throughout.

**Read our Sustainable
Water Statement here:**





Realise the Water Opportunity

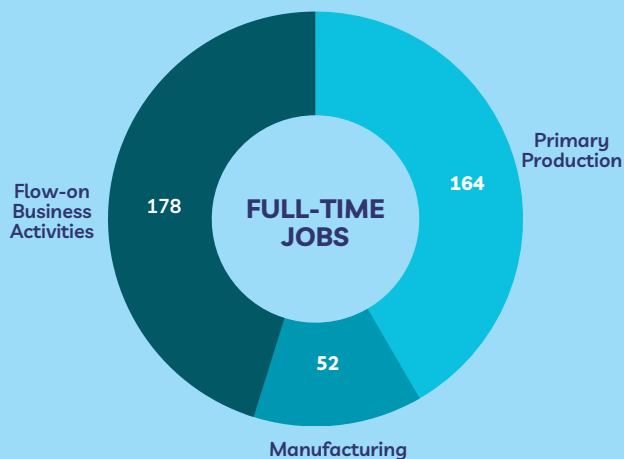
Economic Analysis: Smarter Water Use

Food and fibre drives prosperity in the Great South Coast, and smarter agricultural water use represents incredible opportunity for our region to grow.

A research report commissioned by Food and Fibre Great South Coast in December 2021 and conducted by BDO EconSearch identified the benefits of just a 10 percent increase in the Great South Coast's productive agricultural water use across our whole regional community.

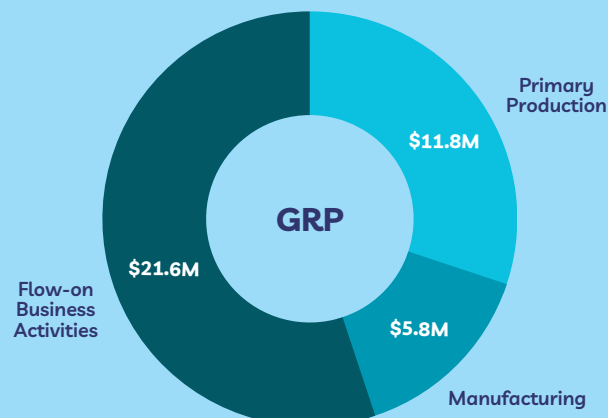
+395 full-time jobs

164 in primary production
52 in manufacturing
178 in non-food and fibre sectors



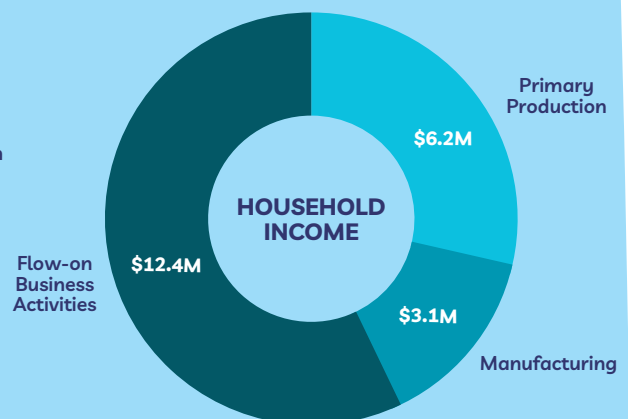
+ \$39.6 million to GRP

\$11.8m in primary production
\$5.8m in manufacturing
\$21.6m in non-food and fibre sectors



+ \$21.7 million to households

\$6.2m in primary production
\$3.1m in manufacturing
\$12.4m in non-food and fibre sectors



Read the full report here:





Realise the Water Opportunity

“The Great South Coast Economic Futures report confirmed the Food and Fibre sector as not only a key industry in our region, but one that presents significant future opportunities. Deakin University values working closely with Food and Fibre Great South Coast to secure these opportunities and acknowledges the strong progress and successes achieved by the FFGSC”.

Grant Sutherland
Chief Executive Officer
Deakin University South West Victoria



“Food & Fibre Great South Coast is a small organisation with a big impact. The 18-point plan to realise the water opportunity is a blueprint for stronger and more sustainable outcomes across the communities in our region for a long time to come.”

Andrew Jeffers
Managing Director
Wannon Water

“I’m proud to represent the South West Victoria Alliance and Moyne Shire on the board of Food and Fibre Great South Coast to help the sector unlock even more economic benefit for our entire region.”

Brett Davis
Chief Executive Officer, Moyne Shire Council
Board Member, Food and Fibre Great South Coast





Realise the Water Opportunity

18-Point Plan for Water Policy Reform

Following extensive consultation with government, water authorities and local water users, we're proud to have updated and launched the second version of Food and Fibre Great South Coast's pioneering 18-Point Plan for Water Policy Reform at our Sustainable Water Forum in February 2023.

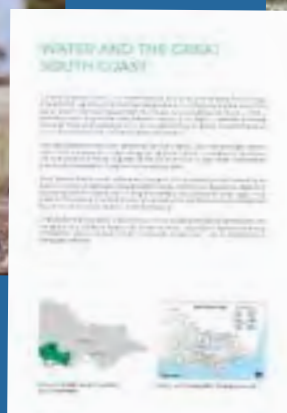
Incorporating key stakeholder feedback, the plan remains informed by leading the BDO EconSearch report Economic Analysis of Food and Fibre in the Great South Coast that calls for smart water use and licensing arrangements to drive productivity and sustainability in the region.

With the modest target of a 10 percent increase in productive agricultural water benchmarked in the report, the plan promises to realise the region's \$40M water opportunity upon its implementation. FFGSC's advocacy efforts have now successfully secured 16 out of 18 vital commitments or commitments to formal processes from government and key water management bodies to achieve this.

These efforts include commitments from the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) and Southern Rural Water to review barriers to temporary and permanent water trading and groundwater licensing, and to conduct research on licence holder sentiment and behaviours regarding water trading, with a view to establishing a water trading platform in Southwest Victoria.

FFGSC is near finalisation of a report in partnership with Southern Rural Water to comprehensively demonstrate our regions competitive advantage in water. This report will showcase the longstanding renewals of water licenses held in our region and their collective underutilisation. We aim to present this report to our regional community to raise awareness and promote uptake of temporary and permanent water trading, as well as to the investor community.

Although we continue to face challenges in resource allocation, we remain committed to deepening engagement with stakeholders, Ministers, and the community to fully deliver this plan for the region.



Read our 18-Point Plan V.2 here:





Realise the Water Opportunity

"Climate change is without doubt one of the most significant issues impacting our economy, communities, and livelihoods. It's more important than ever to collectively invest in and commit to sustainable practices. This is the pathway to support our agribusinesses to thrive, keep improving our supply chain, and bring shared prosperity to their communities."

Tim Foley
Regional Agribusiness Manager
Westpac



"Within 12 months of signing our MOU with FFGSC to help realize their 18-Point Plan, we have made important progress forward in achieving our mutual goals for water management. It's vital that we continue this work to bring about better outcomes for the environment, traditional and recreational users, and of course the productive water uses that drive our economy forward."

Cameron Fitzgerald
Managing Director
Southern Rural Water





Realise the Water Opportunity

Sustainable Water Forum

15 February 2023

Warrnambool

Building on last year's traction, the second Great South Coast Sustainable Water Forum was held on 15 February at Deakin University Warrnambool. The Forum brought together 80 food and fibre, government, industry, and community members to hear the latest in sustainable water practices and industry-led progress on our collective water management goals.

Discussions at the event centred around key topics in the water sector, showing the range of innovative methods government and water management organisations are taking to address water sustainability concerns and improve water management in Victoria. Speakers presented informative and innovative updates on real climate action including biodiversity conservation, environmental restoration at streams and catchments, water delivery systems, and the regional impact of improved land irrigation.

Basil Ryan, former Chair of FFGSC's Realise the Water Opportunity committee, commented on the Victorian Government's Water is Life: Traditional Owner Access to Water roadmap, noting that it honoured the importance of Aboriginal connections to Country, as well as bringing about the crucial balance between Traditional Owner self-determination in water management and the entitlements of wider stakeholders.



Representing Victorian Water Minister Harriet Shing, the Member for Western Victoria, Jacinta Ermacora, congratulated the Victorian Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Change (DEECA) for the strong and strategic work they are undertaking following FFGSC's recommendations. Ermacora further reaffirmed the Victorian Government's support to investigate the economic opportunities provided by the Great South Coast's extensive groundwater system.

Forum speakers included Westpac, Making a Difference (MAD) for The Merri, Southern Rural Water, Wannon Water, Corangamite CMA, Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority and DEECA, who shared an update on their water trading and groundwater management plan.

FFGSC thanks event valued partners Westpac, Southern Rural Water, Wannon Water, the National Landcare Program and Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority, the Wannon Branch of the United Dairy Farmers of Victoria, Victorian Farmers Federation, Corangamite Catchment Management Authority and Deakin University for their generous support and commitment to the region.



Realise the Water Opportunity

“Wise use of water underpins south-west Victoria’s productivity and natural beauty. And good relationships with partners help secure its long-term success. It’s why I’m proud of how we work with Food and Fibre Great South Coast to support a greater understanding of sustainable water opportunities.”

Cameron Fitzgerald
Managing Director
Southern Rural Water



“The region’s long-term prosperity is intrinsically linked to agriculture and its continuing productivity demands that water is managed and used sustainably. This sustainable water forum is an opportunity for the industry and partners to hear about what is being done within the region to support this objective.”

Chris Solum
Event National Landcare Program Partner and Executive Manager
Waterways and Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority





Nurture Food & Fibre Careers

With over 11,000 independent food and fibre businesses in the Great South Coast, many family-owned, our goal lies in supporting these businesses in a rapidly evolving economic landscape. We seek to foster the Great South Coast region as a thriving hub for the food and fibre sector.

Despite current workforce shortages, the food and fibre sector remains one of the largest employers in our region. Earlier research showed a 30 percent growth in local food and fibre jobs is anticipated by the end of 2035 thanks to sustained industry growth. This intensifies the urgency of attracting talented people to our sector. While most of the job openings are attainable through on-the-job training, approximately 39 percent will require a vocational qualification and 19 percent will require a university degree.

Although the future for food and fibre is promising, a poor industry public image coupled with misunderstandings about the range of opportunities on offer and a low availability of regional housing stock for workers, challenge the growth and development of the sector in our region. These problems are not unique to the GSC though.

FFGSC is focused on brokering programs that attract new people and retain talent within the sector. This involves proactively promoting and raising awareness of career pathways, and highlighting the sector's diverse opportunities. Promoting the attractive regional lifestyle, and supporting integrated learning approaches that can better increase food and fibre workforce participation in the sector are also strategies being used by the Nurturing Food and Fibre Careers (NFFC) committee.





Committee



Dr John Flett
Chair



Andrea Vallance



Oonagh Kilpatrick



Martin Clark



Bill Hamill



Jamie Pepper



Dr. Anna Carrucan



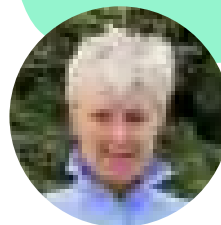
Jonathan Jenkin



Georgina Gubbins
(observer)



"The DemoDAIRY Foundation are proud of our partnership with Food and Fibre Great South Coast. Especially its capacity to demonstrate and showcase a variety of career opportunities in agriculture and dairy, enabling individuals to make informed career choices. Operating on the premise of, "You can't be what you don't see", we are privileged to help share experiences and lessons learnt about inspiring students, supporting educators and engaging community members with the Career Advisory Panel (CAP) and grant-funded programs like The Big Connect and AgFutures."



Andrea Vallance
Chair
DemoDAIRY Foundation



Nurture Food and Fibre Careers

Careers Advisory Panel (CAP)

Comprising an accomplished and diverse mix of food and fibre professionals and supported by the NFFC, the Careers Advisory Panel program serves as a dynamic platform for sharing unique stories, insights, and experiences in the sector. The program has made a substantial impact over the past year, with the Career Advisory Panel reaching over 1300 students and job seekers. The stories shared by the CAP program Ambassadors and volunteers resonate, encouraging students and graduates to consider rewarding careers in food and fibre.

The three objectives of the program are as follows:

- 1 | Raising the food and fibre sector's profile, spotlighting its diverse offerings for young people and job seekers.
- 2 | Enhancing and adding value to existing career-focused initiatives and programs across the Great South Coast region.
- 3 | Fostering connection between educators, students, industry and training providers to create a dynamic network that enriches existing program delivery and knowledge exchange.

In the context of a regional agricultural skills shortage, this program is a crucial initiative that is informing young regional people of new career options. With the support of our funding partners DemoDairy Foundation, William & Lindsay Brodie Foundation and Thomas O'Toole Foundation, and collaboration with the likes of the Neil Porter Legacy Foundation, the Careers Advisory Panel is showcasing the diversity of career pathways into and within the food and fibre sector.

With an already impressive reach, the panel's influence is set to expand further as it meets the next generation of future potential workers for the food and fibre sector in the Great South Coast.



Dr. John Flett
Director Strategy & Research
SouthWest TAFE

"South West TAFE is proud to be working with the Food and Fibre Great South Coast in the delivery of the CAP program. Attracting young people into the sector is vital and the Institute is actively working on a number of other projects that will assist that objective, as well as other initiatives FFGSC has planned."



Careers Advisory Panel



Volunteer Ambassadors



Jonathan Jenkin

Chair

Senior NRM Planner,
Sustainable Agriculture -
Glenelg Catchment
Management Authority

Mixed farm manager

Lucy Collins

Deputy Chair

Veterinarian

Dairy farmer

Karensa Menzies

Principal - Karensa
Menzies Advisory
(AgriFood Consulting)

Bethany Lewis

Business and Events
Officer - Moyne Shire

Marketing Manager,
Social Media - Tribe

Rowan Ault

Field Service
Manager, SW Vic & SA
- Saputo Dairy
Australia

Kym Mathew

Milk Supply
Manager (SA) -
UDC Milk

Carlie Barry

Organic dairy and
regenerative
farm owner



Martin Clark

Operations
Manager GT -
Australian
Bluegum
Plantation

Marie Thornton

Farmer and
business
manager

Kelsey Johnson

Environmental
Forester - PF
Olsen Australia

Victoria Stack

Forester -
PF Olsen
Australia

Courtney Pink

Technical Manager,
Forestry - SFM
Environmental
Solutions

Bronte Gorrige

AgriBusiness
Banker

Rachael James

AgriBusiness
Manager

Ralph Cotter

Regional Leader,
Barwon South
West - Agriculture
Victoria



Madeline Campbell

Silvicultural
Supervisor - ABP

Samantha Andrews

Farm engagement
lead - WestVic Dairy

Dairy farmer

Cecilia Sbrizzi

AgriBusiness
professional

Dairy farmer

With thanks to program sponsors:





Nurture Food and Fibre Careers

AgFutures

The AgFutures initiative was launched by the Victorian Minister for Agriculture Gayle Tierney at FFGSC Deputy Chair, Oonagh Kilpatrick's farm in August 2022. The initiative, poised to shape the future of agriculture in the Barwon South West region, is designed to bridge the gap between young job seekers and rural workforce shortages.

Funded by the Victorian Government's Workforce Training Innovation Fund, AgFutures brings together six expert partner organisations: South West TAFE, Skills Impact, Dairy Australia, Food & Fibre Great South Coast, Brophy Family & Youth Services (Brophy), and the Brotherhood of St. Laurence (BSL). As the enabling organisation, BSL oversees the administration, strategic governance and evaluation of the initiative.

AgFutures aims to create a sustainable entry-level pathway to enable up to 50 unemployed young people to develop the technical and transferable skills needed to secure food and fibre jobs across the region. Up to 40 host employers are being engaged, and FFGSC is an active and engaged partner in the co-design, industry engagement, attraction of young people and employers.

For more information: <https://agfutures.bsl.org.au/>

"We witnessed powerful conversations arising and potential career pathways for attendees became more attainable and apparent. Participants would not have been exposed to this breadth of opportunity without the genuine stories and demonstrated passion by the panellists, and Natalie as facilitator. In conjunction with Food and Fibre Great South Coast we are excited to continue to keep the spotlight on the extensive range of varied and fulfilling food and fibre career pathways."

Anne Murphy
Chief Executive Officer
Glenelg and Southern
Grampians LLEN



"Food & Fibre Great South Coast have been a critical partner in the AgFutures initiative and have made a significant contribution to the efforts to innovative new forms of entry level training that open the doors for young people to pursue sustainable agricultural careers. The Brotherhood of St. Laurence and the AgFutures team are grateful to FFGSC for their expertise and championing of opportunities for young people."



Kira Clarke
Principal Research Fellow,
Skills and Training
Brotherhood of St. Lawrence

Food and Fibre Educator Resources

In June 2023, Food and Fibre Great South Coast released a comprehensive suite of interactive classroom resources, designed to increase school student's exposure and understanding of Victoria's diverse food and fibre sector. This initiative stems from FFGSC's commitment to advocate for rewarding career pathways within the food and fibre sector and promote integrated learning methodologies. These free resources, curated from industry and education leaders, align with key areas of the Australian curriculum, streamlining teaching and enhancing student engagement.

Through the Careers Advisory Panel's advocacy these free teaching resources are being brought into local schools. The animated stories, videos, interactive games, and reading materials link seamlessly with our panel members stories. These resources, tied to the Australian curriculum through science, design, technology, and geography, assist schools to provide a well-rounded and informed student experience.

Access the Food and Fibre Curriculum Aligned Educational Resources here:





Nurture Food and Fibre Careers

Food and Fibre Careers Tasting Trail

The inaugural Food and Fibre Careers Tasting Trail concluded with resounding success as jobseekers connected with potential careers opportunities in the food and fibre sector. This trailblazing initiative – delivered under the Workforce Australia Local Jobs Program and in partnership with local employment services agency WDEA Works – brought together over 80 jobseekers and community members at three engaging panel and lunch events in Warrnambool, Heywood, and Hamilton.

The impact was immense. Prior to attending the event, 35 percent of participants expressed an interest in pursuing a career in food and fibre. After attending the event, this increased to 67 percent. An overwhelming 94 percent of attendees felt welcomed and supported throughout the event. The event has already facilitated the connection between multiple jobseekers and new career opportunities.

FFGSC expresses gratitude to program partners, panelists, and all attendees for their exceptional enthusiasm and engagement, paving the way for continued efforts in empowering jobseekers and nurturing the food and fibre industry in our Great South Coast region.



“We witnessed powerful conversations arising and potential career pathways for attendees became more attainable and apparent. Participants would not have been exposed to this breadth of opportunity without the genuine stories and demonstrated passion by the panellists, and Natalie as facilitator. In conjunction with Food and Fibre Great South Coast we are excited to continue to keep the spotlight on the extensive range of varied and fulfilling food and fibre career pathways.”

Angela Hewett
Employment Facilitator
Workforce Australia



Nurture Food and Fibre Careers

Leadership For All Seasons

22 March 2023

Warrnambool

Food and Fibre Great South Coast, and event partner Westpac Agribusiness, welcomed leaders from across the region to celebrate International Women's Day with our second Leadership for All Seasons high tea event. The event welcomed over 80 employers, industry leaders and community members to showcase leadership skills and discuss the crucial role played by women in the food and fibre sector.

Following a poignant Welcome to Country from Uncle Robbie Lowe, our three speakers, Sophie Krantz, Bayley Mifsud and Oonagh Kilpatrick, delivered insightful presentations that highlighted the significance of diverse pathways to leadership, and inspired us to think more broadly than our traditional idea of an effective leader, showing that they come in all styles.



Peek and Kirrae Whurrong woman, **Bayley Mifsud**, shared her cultural and artistic journey. Her business is named after her indigenous name, Merindah-Gunya, which means Beautiful Spirit. Bayley's presentation impressed our audience with her strength and honesty as she spoke emotionally about why she is staunchly committed to reconciliation, and what is needed to achieve it. The power of her words reflected the power of her art, much of which celebrates local landmarks. Bayley's contribution was a masterclass in authentic leadership.

Global strategist, **Sophie Krantz**, drew from her vast experience in empowering businesses and entrepreneurs to thrive on the international stage. Sharing her story from a suburban upbringing to building a network of international pen pals to ultimately living her dream as an international citizen, Sophie's story was a reminder that anything is possible. Her insights on resolutely living her purpose and backing yourself resonated with our audience and underscored the universal value of adaptable leadership in navigating diverse challenges.



Oonagh Kilpatrick's cross-continental journey spanning international finance to dairy farming in southwest Victoria was a testament to her sense of adventure, intelligence and diverse leadership skills. Oonagh shared the challenges of her childhood in Ireland, highlighting the importance of inclusion and empathy. As well as often having our audience in stitches, her story exemplified the courage and many paths that contribute to the vibrancy of the food and fibre sector in our region.

FFGSC extends our thanks to our event partner Westpac Agribusiness, and to in-kind partner Deakin University for their support and generous contributions to the event.





Champion Food and Fibre Advocacy

Advocacy is an intrinsic part of what we do at Food and Fibre Great South Coast. Advocacy is woven into our wide range of activities, events and policy-driven engagements, and we are tireless in our drive to raise awareness of our food and fibre sector's regional significance, professionalism, and accomplishments.

We understand good advocacy has two components – keeping you, our network, informed, and providing the region with cohesive and unified support for swift and effective outcomes.

In advocating for a modern and resilient sector, guided by adaptable and effective policy frameworks, our objectives are to highlight the significance of the region's food and fibre sector, generate positive impacts on food and fibre policy outcomes using a collaborative and inclusive voice, and prioritising transparent and accessible stakeholder communications.





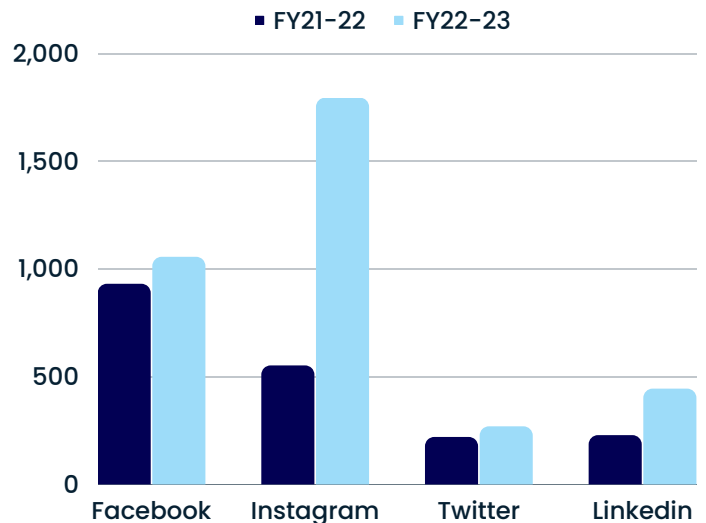
Champion Food and Fibre Advocacy

Social Media Strategy

Social media remains a crucial avenue for FFGSC to engage stakeholders and provide a platform to celebrate food and fibre successes. Alongside our growth in audience and engagement, during FY22-23 we have increased video content, adopted a more conversational tone, and showcased more exemplary individuals from our region to foster pride and connection within our community.

Our social media growth has been significant, growing 600 percent in 2.5 years.

Follower growth over FY22-23



Strategic Plan

While the period for the current Strategic Plan 2021 - 23 is coming to a close, key partner consultations commenced in February 2023 indicate a strong view that FFGSC should continue implementing our four strategic priorities.

We will continue to consult in advance of our Strategic Plan 2024 - 27 release next year.



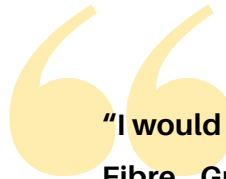


Champion Food and Fibre Advocacy

Advocacy Spotlight

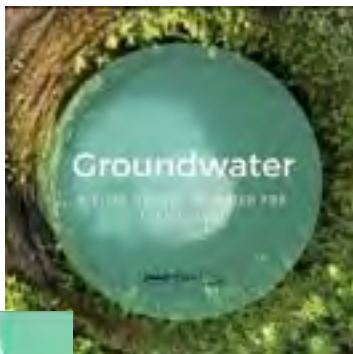
Groundwater

We leveraged our social media channels to bring attention to groundwater, an often overlooked yet vital source of water across agriculture, urban and domestic water supply, as well as industry and stock use. Across three posts, we highlighted different topics surrounding groundwater, including its usage, the creation of aquifers, and the vital role of groundwater in the water cycle. We also showcased its historical use as a dependable source for drinking and irrigation, all while quietly shaping the Earth through weathering and geomorphological processes. This campaign, supported by Southern Rural Water, was designed to highlight the importance of the resource, leading to greater awareness and commitment to groundwater sustainability in our region.



"I would like to congratulate Food and Fibre Great South Coast for their ongoing work in developing a sustainable future for our agricultural industry. Agriculture in Southwest Victoria as a major contributor to the country's economy forms a vibrant and thriving part of our community and the work undertaken by Food and Fibre Great South Coast helps to add value and provide a positive and sustainable future for the industry."

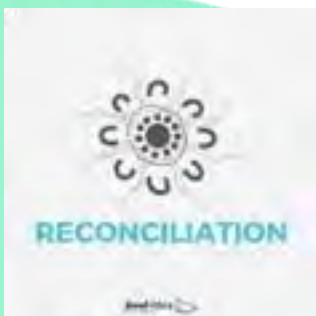
**Dan Tehan MP
Member for Wannon**



Advocacy Spotlight

Respect and Reconciliation

As part of our reconciliation work, we used our social media channels to shine a light on the First Nations communities of South West of Victoria. Our campaign goals were to show respect to the traditional owners on the lands in which we live and work, raise awareness of their rich cultural heritage and link to the pages of traditional owner communities, and support our desire to work more closely together with traditional owners. Through a simple activation of five posts, we highlighted a diverse group of local indigenous nations, the Gunditjmarra, Eastern Maar, Jardwadjali, Wadawurrung and Buganditj peoples. While this may be considered small, it is noteworthy because it has been rare for peak bodies in food and fibre to lead in this space. We know small steps like these, when consistently applied, will drive positive social change towards reconciliation, inclusion, and acknowledgment of indigenous peoples' contributions to the Great South Coast region.



Media

Substantial print and radio media coverage was earned in state and local radio and newspapers.

This media coverage includes:

- ▶ **The Hamilton Spectator**
- ▶ **The Portland Chronicle**
- ▶ **The Weekly Times**
- ▶ **The Warrnambool Standard**
- ▶ **95.3 Coast FM**
- ▶ **ABC Radio**





Champion Food and Fibre Advocacy

Consultation and Feedback

Our social media channels were a rich source of connecting our community to opportunities to be heard.

Key consultations we shared were:

- The Hexham Windfarm Social and Economic Impact Assessment seeking feedback from local residents and community members about the proposed Hexham Windfarm project.
- We have shared consultations from the national Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water (DCCEEW), and sought local feedback on crucial government initiatives such as Victoria's Biosecurity Strategy and the federal Offshore Renewable Energy Infrastructure Area Proposal.
- As part of the Commonwealth Government's Future Drought Fund, we encouraged community members to have their say on a draft Drought Resilience action plan for our region.



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