



AGRIBUSINESS INDUSTRY PLAN 2021 - 2026



MARCH 2022

KEMPSEY SHIRE COUNCIL



Acknowledgement of original owners of this land

Kempsey Shire Council acknowledges the land of the Thunghutti/Dunghutti Nation. We pay respects to Elders past and present. We acknowledge the role of emerging leaders to continue to guide us in the future. We acknowledge the Stolen Generations and the need to change practices to be inclusive. This land always was and always will be Thunghutti/Dunghutti land.

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INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is a traditional mainstay of the Macleay Valley, with the industry originally built on the production of dairy products, beef and other livestock products, with a growing contribution from fruit, nut, other horticultural products and aquaculture.

Agribusiness in the Macleay Valley involves corporate agricultural enterprises, traditional family farming pursuits and small scale and hobby farming activities. It also supports several significant processing and manufacturing facilities.

Kempsey and surrounds is a traditional farming community that boasts large tracts of arable land close to the coast, along the banks of the Macleay River, within the waters of the river and in the expansive hinterland regions.

Today, agriculture employs over 500 people, or approximately 5% of the total workforce in the Macleay Valley (*ID Profile data, 2020*).

Although agricultural businesses represent the highest number of registered businesses within the Macleay Valley, accounting for 28% of all business registrations (629 out 2,240 businesses) the value added to the economy currently ranks much lower with an estimated \$33 million in 2020, which is 4% of the regions total (*ID Profile data, 2020*).

The agribusiness industry action plan scope represents the growth and export potential of the industry and comprises of primary processors, food manufacturers, growers, farmers and nurseries and agri-tourism.

VISION

The vision for Agribusiness within the Macleay Valley is as follows:

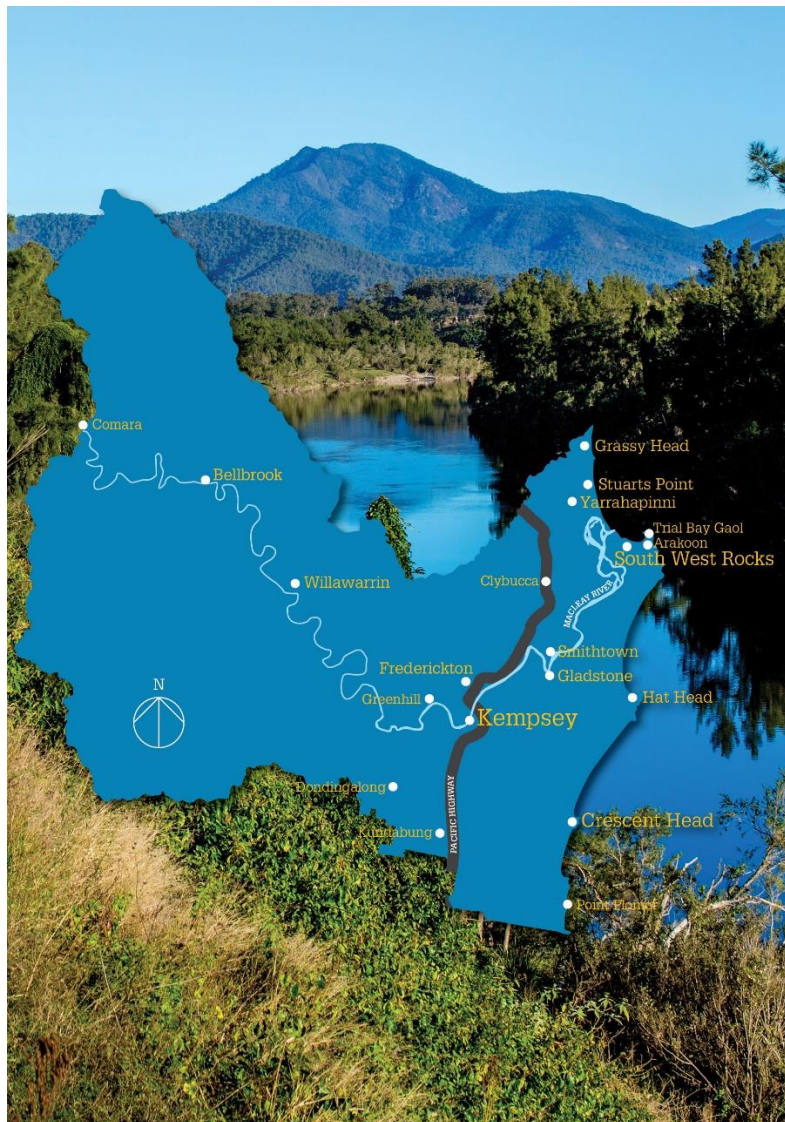
“To support the development of the Macleay Valley as a location for smart and sustainable agribusiness to help drive industry diversification into new areas of Agribusiness and Economic Development and build on the Macleay Valley’s comparative and competitive strengths”- Horizon 2030.

REGIONAL PROFILE

The Macleay Valley is located on the Mid North Coast of NSW, between Port Macquarie and Coffs Harbour. In *June 2020 ID Profile* calculated The Shire's population at 29,921. The major urban centre is the town of Kempsey.

The Pacific Highway passes through the Shire on the outskirts of Kempsey, connecting the Macleay Valley to neighbouring towns, as well as to Sydney and Brisbane:

- 35 minutes' drive south to Port Macquarie (49kms via the Pacific Highway)
- 1.5 hours' drive north to Coffs Harbour (112kms via the Pacific Highway)
- 4.5 hours' drive south to Sydney (430km via the Pacific Highway)
- 6 hours' drive north to Brisbane (538kms via Pacific Highway)



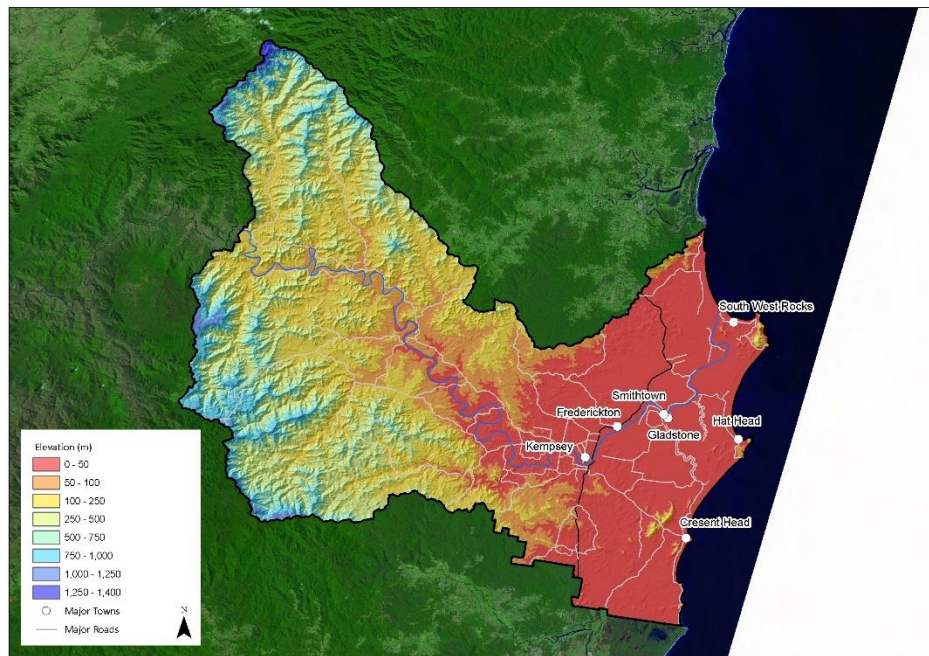
Map of the Kempsey LGA

Overview of Biodiversity in Kempsey Local Government Area

Owing to its location, size and topography, the Kempsey Local Government Area (LGA) spans both subtropical and temperate climatic zones, which influences the flora and fauna found within the region. It has a varied topography which has been formed by major tectonic and other geomorphological processes throughout a long geological history (*Kempsey Shire Biodiversity Strategy – Background Information [KSBS], 2018*).

Elevation

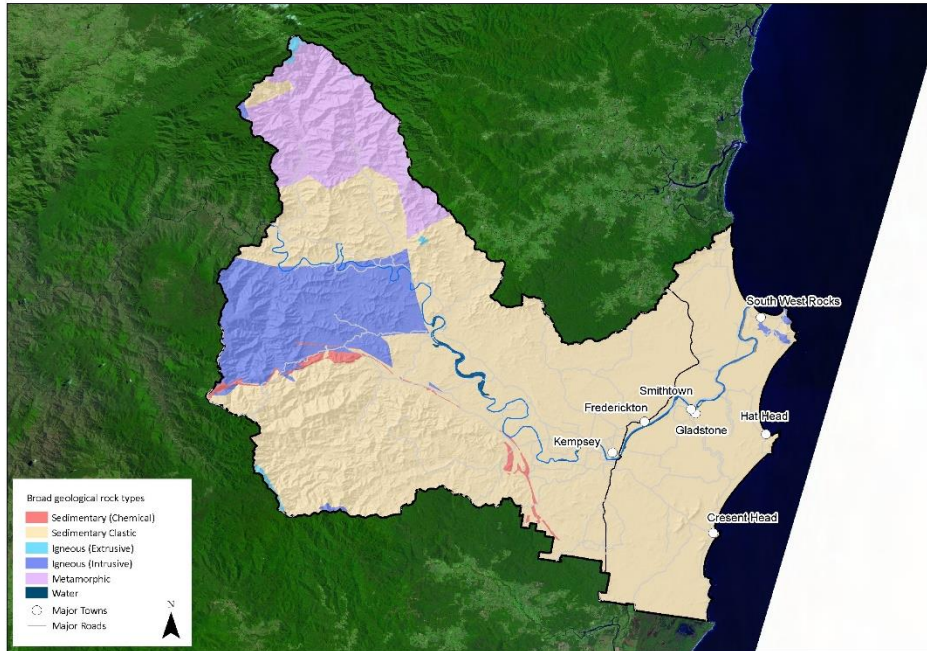
The LGA rises from sea level at the coast through to elevations of around 1,400 metres on the north-western margins of the LGA which border on the edge of the NSW New England Tablelands. As a general rule, slope steepness increases away from the coastal plain and reaches maximum steepness within those parts defined as the Escarpment Ranges (*KSBS, 2018*).



Elevation of the Kempsey LGA [KSBS, 2018]

Geology

The predominant broad rock type within the LGA is sedimentary, however other geological units of metamorphic, igneous extrusive and intrusive rock types also occur to a lesser degree [\(KSBS, 2018\)](#).

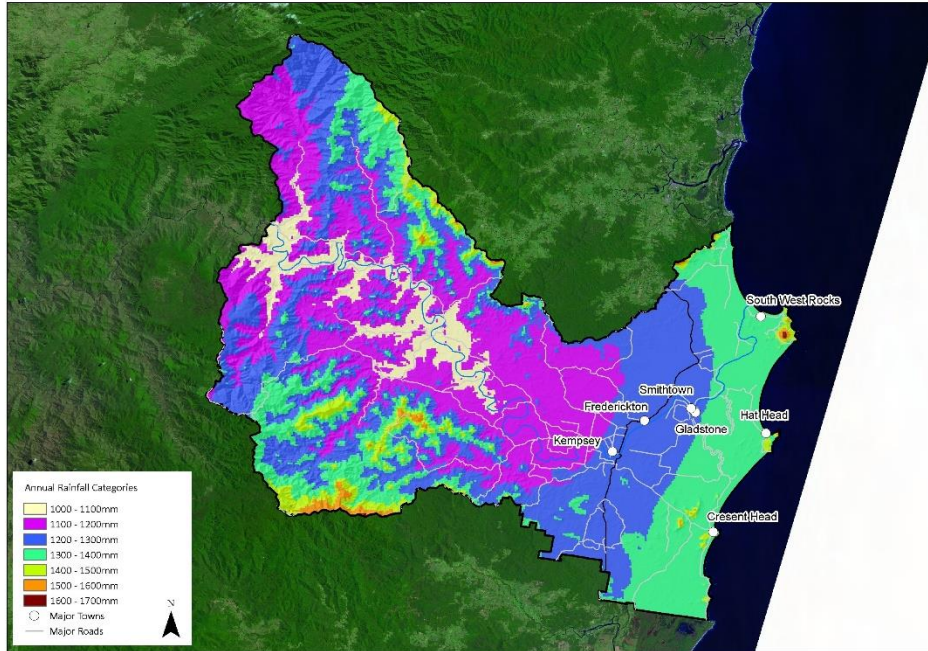


Broad Geological Rock Types of the Kempsey LGA - [\(KSBS, 2018\)](#)

Climate

The size of the LGA and the significant variation in altitude means that the region experiences both subtropical and temperate climatic zones. Rainfall distribution and temperatures vary across the LGA. The coastal areas receive around 1,300mm to 1,400mm annually with rainfall decreasing on a westward gradient with the upper reaches of the Macleay River receiving the lowest annual totals (around 1,000mm – 1,100mm). The north-west and south-west portions of the escarpment ranges however, experience the greatest annual rainfall of up to 1,700mm [\(KSBS, 2018\)](#).

The greatest temperatures of the hottest months are experienced around 30km to 70km inland from the coast within the midland hills and escarpment ranges. The highest parts of the escarpment ranges experience the lowest temperatures [\(KSBS, 2018\)](#).

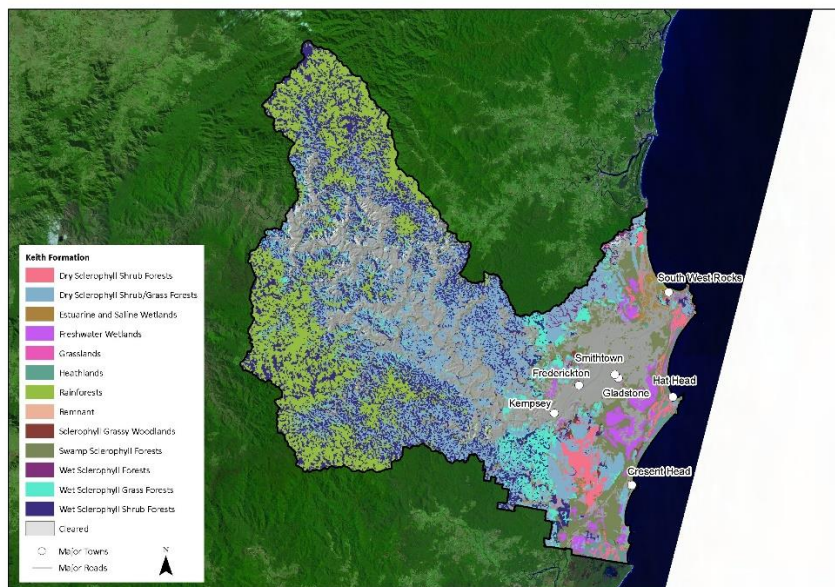


Annual Rainfall of the Kempsey LGA (KSBS, 2018)

Vegetation

Over 206,000 hectares of Kempsey Shire is covered by native vegetation. A wide range of broad vegetation formations as described by Keith, 2004, are represented across the LGA (KSBS, 2018). Dry Sclerophyll Shrub/Grass Forests (69,508 hectares) are the most extensive, followed by Wet Sclerophyll Shrub Forests (66,835 hectares) and Rainforests (63,365 hectares). Combined, these three formations make up about three-quarters of the native vegetation in the Kempsey Shire.

Keith Formation	Area Ha	% of Total
Dry Sclerophyll Shrub Forests	7,737	2.96
Dry Sclerophyll Shrub/Grass Forests	69,508	26.61
Estuarine and Saline Wetlands	1,438	0.55
Freshwater Wetlands	7,792	2.98
Grasslands	26	0.01
Heathlands	3699	1.42
Rainforests	6,3365	24.26
Sclerophyll Grassy Woodlands	612	0.23
Swamp Sclerophyll Forests	23,940	9.16
Wet Sclerophyll Forests	1,261	0.48
Wet Sclerophyll Grass Forests	15,015	5.75
Wet Sclerophyll Shrub Forests	66,835	25.58
<i>Total Vegetation</i>	<i>261,228</i>	<i>100</i>



Vegetation formations in the Kempsey LGA - (KSBS, 2018)

Land-use

The most recent data collected on the population of the individual townships within the Kempsey Shire come from the *Australian Bureau of Statistics Census (ABS) in 2016* outlined below. This is different to the most recent ID Profile data we have referenced earlier as the ID Profile data does not include township breakdowns.

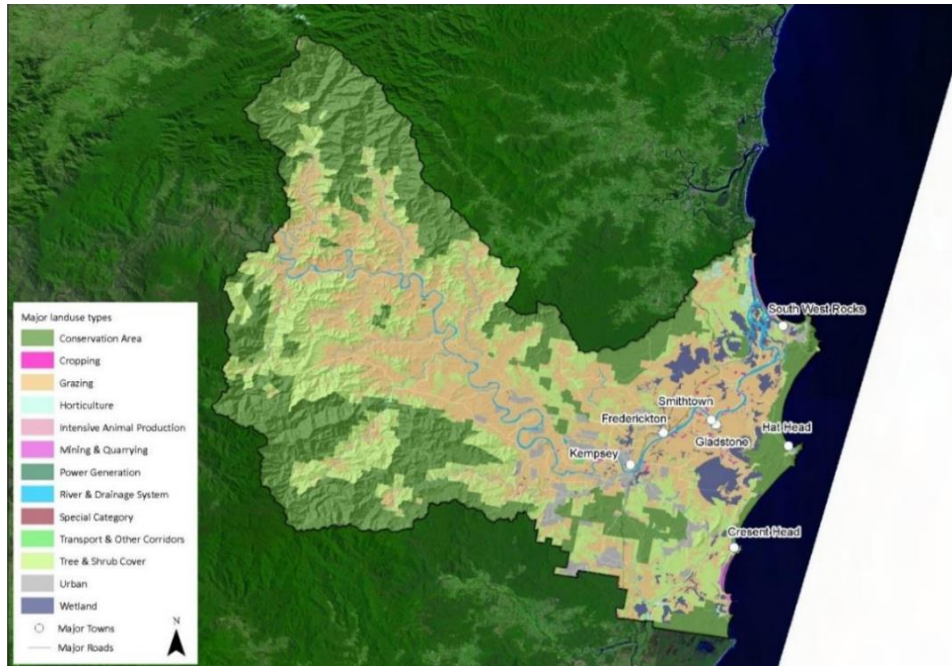
Town	Population
Kempsey	14,754
South West Rocks	4,603
Crescent Head	1,531
Frederickton	1,391
Gladstone/Smithtown	932
Stuarts Point	766

All these townships are located within the Coastal Plains and account for over two-thirds of the total population of the LGA.

While there are a vast range of land use classes within the Kempsey Shire, it is dominated by 3 broad categories:

1. Conservation land which includes NPWS estate and state forests
2. Grazing land
3. Tree and shrub cover.

Grazing land use types tend to occur on the flatter parts of the coastal plains and the central parts of the midland hills and escarpment ranges. Tree and shrub cover class predominantly occurs on the flanks of the Midland Hills and Escarpment Ranges (KSBS, 2018).



Major land use and management classes across the Kempsey LGA (KSBS, 2018).

Landscapes

The Kempsey LGA comprises a rich and precious variety of biodiversity across some 337,000 ha of the Mid-North Coast region of NSW. To understand the biodiversity of the area the LGA has been divided into three distinct landscape units.

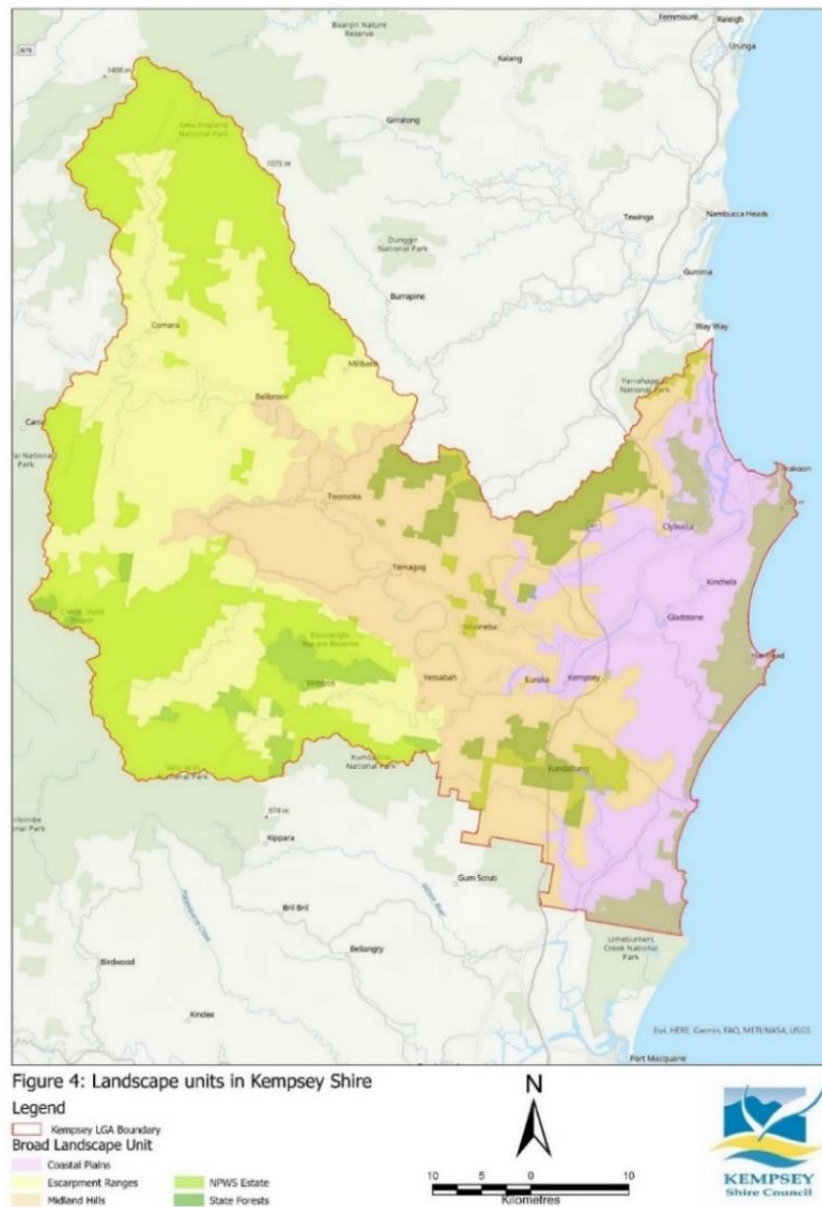
The division of the LGA into 3 landscape units helps show the conservation status, land-uses and clearing rates across the LGA. (KSBS, 2018).

Landscape Unit	Escarpment Ranges
Coastal Plains	Most of the tenure of the 70,000 ha that comprises the Coastal Plains is private land. Private land accounts for some 51,000 ha or 73% of the total area. Of this, approximately 27,500 ha is classified as grazing land use. Public land estate (National Park and State Forest estate) accounts for around 14,250 ha or 20% of the coastal plains with the bulk of National Park area occurring along the coastline margins. Hat Head National Park is the largest National Park in the coastal plains landscape at 7,397 ha. Other sizeable National Park areas are Yarrahapinni National Park at 1,300 ha, and Limeburners Creek National Park occupies around 2,800 ha.
Midland Hills	The dominant land use is grazing. It accounts for just over 48,000 ha or 48% of the total landscape. A further 21,500 ha or 21% is identified as tree and shrub cover which often includes grazing activities.
Escarpment Ranges	The dominant land use within the Escarpment Ranges is land identified as Conservation, that is, National Park or State Forest estate. This land use accounts for around 88,000 ha or 53% of the landscape. The two largest National Parks in this landscape are New England National Park and Willi Willi National Park. Grazing is also a significant activity with just over 50,000 ha or around 30% of the landscape unit under this land use type.

Vegetation and tenure coverage across landscape units

Vegetation coverage	Escarpment Ranges	Midland Hills	Coastal Plains
Conservation land (National Park Estate and State Forests)	87,835 ha (53%)	19,293 ha (19%)	14,243 ha (20%)
Private land - Woody vegetation cover	61,087 ha (37%)	51,918 ha (51%)	32,758 ha (47%)
Private land - estimated cleared area	17,430 ha (10%)	29,920 ha (30%)	22,697 ha (33%)

(KSBS, 2018)



Landscape units within Kempsey LGA (KSBS,2018).

Private Land Size Range

Below is a breakdown of property sizes in the Kempsey LGA.

Property size range (ha)	Number	Proportion number (%)	Area (ha)	Proportion area (%)
0 - 10	10,642	82%	9860	5%
11 - 50	1708	13%	43,763	21%
51 - 100	357	3%	24,630	12%
> 101	322	2%	128,890	62%
Total	13,029	100%	207,143	100%

⁵ Note: excludes public land such as national parks and state forests. Based on Geographic Information System (GIS) analysis of the Kempsey Shire Council property layer.

Property Size Range, (MVFBIG, 2016)

Kempsey Shire Agribusiness Profile

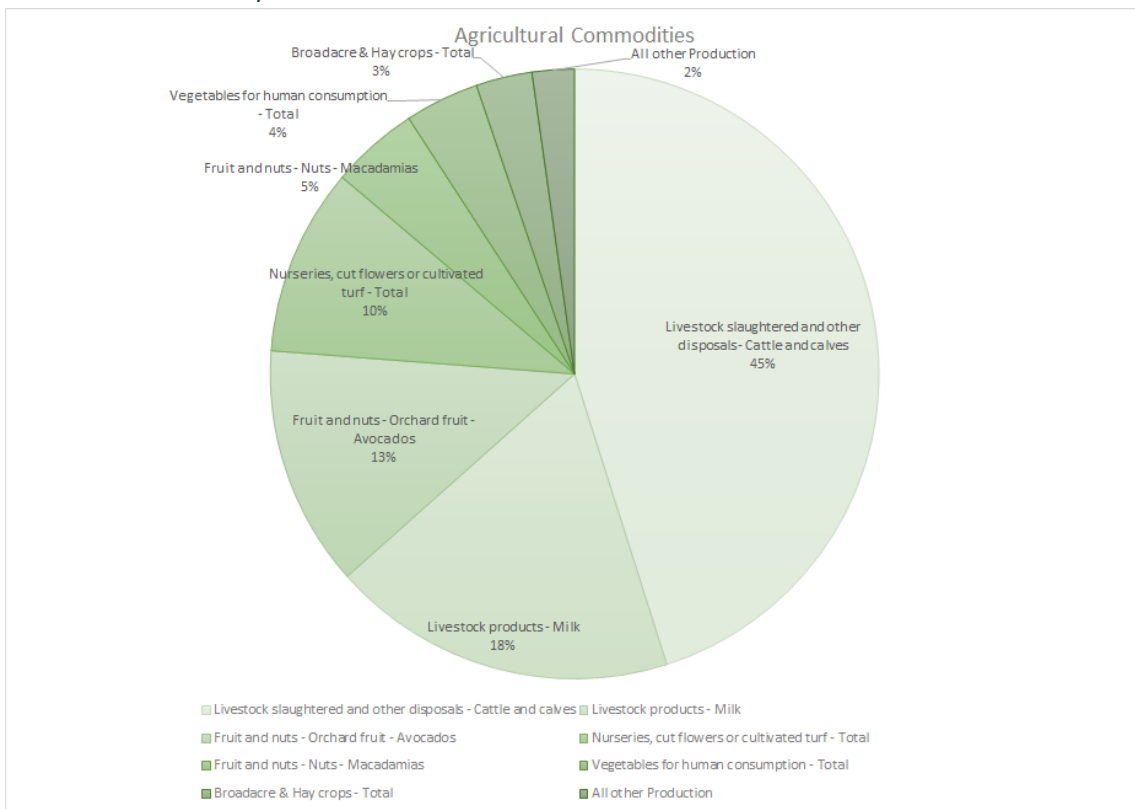
Agribusiness Overview

Value of Agricultural production in the Kempsey Shire

Commodity	\$ PA
Livestock slaughtered and other disposals - Cattle and calves	16,375,937
Milk	6,657,619
Avocados	4,638,553
Nurseries, cut flowers or cultivated turf	3,612,744
Macadamias	1,694,628
Vegetables for human consumption	1,432,561
Broadacre & Hay crops	1,083,981
All other Production	814,192
Total agriculture	\$36,310,215

(ABS, 2016) *This data does not include aquaculture, apiary, timber or processing as the Agricultural survey does not include these industries.

**This data is from the 2016 ABS Census. Data quoted on page 4 is from ID Profile in 2020 , the data above was utilised because it includes a commodity break down.



Agricultural Value Comparison

When compared to other LGAs on the Mid North Coast, Kempsey Shire's relative value in the 2015-16 census is listed below.

(All figures in \$ values)

Commodity	Kempsey	Bellingen	Nambucca	Port Macquarie Hastings	Coffs Harbour	Clarence Valley	Mid Coast
Livestock - Cattle and calves	16,375,937	6,375,802	7,372,598	15,191,374	5,505,241	52,044,233	52,868,150
Livestock products - Milk	6,657,619	8,159,889	9,281,635	19,819,164	4,435,986	11,914,965	50,857,168
Fruit and nuts - Orchard fruit - Avocados	4,638,553	799,546	229,338	8,870,669	685,841	71,567	627,492
Nurseries, cut flowers or cultivated turf	3,612,744	180,270	1,866,809	218,287	5,655,561	3,712,118	8,689,329
Fruit and nuts - Nuts - Macadamias	1,694,628	215,311	1,995,861	204,883	1,264,386	267,655	212,878
Vegetables for human consumption	1,432,561	488,937	1,881,968	1,152,744	2,856,639	1,416,748	262,522
Broadacre & Hay crops - Total	1,083,981	346,062	10,646	2,315,954	105,014	44,313,516	4,402,456
Poultry	3,291	13,302	4,002	119,980	9,130	325,947	76,242,111
Blueberries	0	151	28,818	217,131	89,782,894	5,450,309	91,090
All other Production	810,901	469,272	1,026,049	401,125	3,192,356	278,207	310,331
Total agriculture	36,310,215	17,048,542	23,697,724	48,511,311	113,493,048	119,795,265	194,563,527

Regional comparison of the value of Agriculture, (ABS, 2016)

Industry Snapshots

The Australian Bureau of Statistics Agricultural Census is used as an Industry benchmark for agricultural commodity value. However, this data is only collected every five years. The below industry snapshots were collated from ABS 2015/2016, ID Profile 2020 and specific industry bodies directly to get the most up to date and relevant snapshot.



629 registered agricultural business
4.6 % of the population employed in agriculture
526 agricultural employees (excluding business owners)



25,000 – 40,000 head throughput p/a Kempsey Regional Saleyards
200 people employed at the multi-species Frederickton abattoir



12 Dairy producers in the Kempsey Shire produced \$6.6 million dollars' worth of milk in 2015



2015 there were 4,964 tonnes of avocados dispatched while in 2020 this increased to 7,459 tonnes



Oyster production represents 0.07% of the Macleay Valley agricultural output



3 sawmills
110 direct jobs



Organics are an emerging industry within the Agriculture sector within the Macleay Valley



Processing & packaging facilities provide a critical stimulus for the industry sector within the shire, is a strong employer, which allows smaller and regional growers to access processing capability.



Macadamia value in the region has increased from \$1.6M pa to \$11M pa in 2020.

As discussed above, the ABS Agricultural Census is used as an Industry benchmark for agricultural commodity value. However, as this data is only collected every five years, it cannot accurately reflect current agricultural production levels or commodity prices. The last census was conducted during a prolonged drought in the Macleay Valley from 2014 to the beginning of 2020.

The following industries are a representation that have had large scale fluctuations in value and production or are not included in the ABS data. Engaging with industry groups directly is a valuable way that we can attain real time data and value of specific industries within the Macleay Valley.

Council will continue to obtain this data from relevant industry bodies so that we can best support and advocate for the relevant industries as per the issues and trends occurring at the time.

Avocados

In the 2015/16 ABS Census, shire wide avocado production was valued at \$4.6 million dollars. Avocado Australia, the peak industry body for avocado production, advised that in the 2020/21 financial year, avocado production in the Kempsey Shire reached \$40 million dollars, an increase of 900% in less than 5 years, and eclipsing the total agricultural production figure for all industries in the 2015/16 ABS census.

This presents an opportunity for the Council to engage further with Avocado growers on how we can best support them to help maintain and continue to grow this industry.

Oysters

According to the Department of Primary Industries, oyster production hit the lowest on record in the 19/20 year for the Kempsey region with only 57,041 dozen oysters harvested (45 % decrease on previous year's production) and a total farm gate price of \$512,000. This production will be significantly lower for the 20/21 year after fire and flood impacts, and gate price decreasing significantly due to the on-going effect of COVID-19 on the hospitality industry. (This data is not yet published).

This presents an opportunity for Council to advocate for grants, funding, and support for this industry.

Macadamias

Macadamia production has fluctuated significantly in the intervening years since the last census. ABS data for 2015/16 reflects a value of production of \$1.6M pa for the Kempsey region. The tonne price however, according to Macadamias Australia has increased by 54% since 2015, representing an estimated value of production in 2020 of \$11M pa in the Kempsey region which is 700% increase.

This presents an opportunity for the Council to engage with Macadamia producers and support this industry to continue to assist in increasing production for the region.

Agricultural Industry Assets

Kempsey Regional Saleyards



BLERF Saleyards Funding Announcement

To retain its position as a leading regional saleyard, Kempsey Regional Saleyards (KRS) needs to continue to provide a competitive facility to enable local vendors and buyers to buy and sell cattle. Continuing to invest in technology and facilities to make for efficient and high-quality transactions, with positive animal welfare management, will ensure cattle buyers and sellers utilise the KRS and are less likely to transact directly, online, or via neighbouring yards, either within or outside the region, which would result in a loss of market share for KRS and economic benefit for residents of the Kempsey Shire and the broader region.

KRS are the largest saleyards within the Hastings-Macleay region, with the only other saleyard being a small privately run saleyard at Wauchope. Furthermore, KRS has the largest throughput of any saleyards located on the Mid North Coast and is therefore, an important regional agricultural asset for the Mid North Coast of NSW.

In July 2021, it was announced that Kempsey Shire Council was successful in securing a \$6.3m grant under the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund (jointly funded by NSW State and Federal Government). This upgrade is essential for KRS to remain competitive, continue to contribute to regional capacity and the economic prosperity of the region.

The objective of the KRS infrastructure upgrade project is to provide a modern facility addressing animal welfare and work health and safety requirements, along with reducing the impact on the environment in terms of waste management, water usage and electricity consumption. The major focus areas are:

Regional and Shire-wide Benefits:

Increase KRS's operational viability and economic stimulus to the local economy:

- Through increased expenditure and employment, both directly and indirectly, during the construction phase and beyond; and
- Ensuring local farmers have a readily accessible, high quality and economic saleyard facility at which to conduct their business. KRS retains its status as one of the premier cattle selling facilities on the Mid North Coast NSW;
- Maintain KRS as a critical stock refuge during declared emergency events which directly strengthens community resilience and reduces the impacts of future natural disaster events for the LGA;
- Ensure KRS continues to operate in accordance with government regulations, community expectations and industry standards; and
- Contribute to the social and mental well-being of local farmers through the provision of sale days.

KRS Benefits:

- Improve animal welfare;
- Reduce workplace health and safety risks;
- Improve livestock handling and saleyard efficiency;
- Reduce environmental impacts (solar, water harvesting and LED lighting);
- Increase returns for the cattle producers, Council and agents; and
- Reduce operational costs.

The infrastructure upgrades will include, but not limited to:

- Establish 'Colorbond' roofing over all Inbound and Outbound yards except Camel yards;
- Remove existing concrete and gravel yard floors and replace with sawdust/sand in all undercover yards;
- Agents Office Space/Portable Beside Selling Ring (including grandstand);
- Demolition, relocation and installation of a new Amenity Block Upgrade & which include shower facilities;
- Graded gravel or paved roadside for truck and visitor parking;
- Kiosk Alfresco Area – demolish and reinstate with container / modular kiosk; and
- Demolition of calf yards and replace with stock-proof boundary fencing.

Privately Owned and/or Community-Managed Assets

The following assets are privately owned or community managed, that support the local agricultural industry and work to connect the supply chain locally.

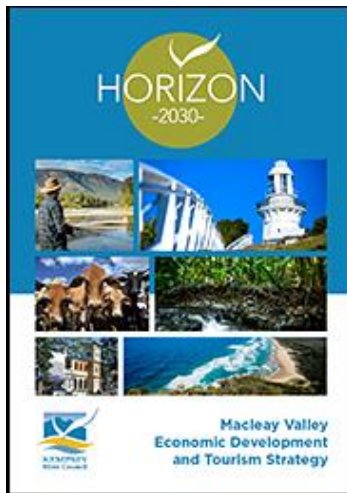
- Multispecies Abattoir
- Showgrounds
 - Gladstone Showground
 - Kempsey Showground
 - Willawarrin Showground
- Three Sawmills
- Fruit Packing Facility
- Macadamia Nut Processing Plant
- Seafood Co-Op
- Fruit, Vegetable and Meat Local Delivery Services
- Agricultural Transport Services
- Agricultural Retail Stores
- Local Markets.

AGRIBUSINESS PLANNING CONTEXT

This Industry Plan was shaped by referencing Local, State and Federal Government Agricultural Industry plans and strategies. Integrating these plans and strategies throughout this document has enabled Council to align its directions and focus and accumulate support throughout the implementation of the plan.

Local Level Planning Framework – Kempsey Shire

Macleay Valley Economic Development & Tourism Strategy – Horizon 2030 (Horizon 2030)



Horizon 2030 provides a blueprint for enhancing the vibrancy, diversity, and sustainability of the Macleay Valley economy. It strives to realise increased employment opportunities, new industry development, growth and retention of existing businesses, attraction of new residents, and increased tourism activity. Horizon 2030 sets Kempsey Shire Council’s strategic vision for economic development and tourism for the next 10 years and beyond. Horizon 2030 presents a plan of action for Kempsey Shire Council and its partners in government, the non-government sector, industry, and the community to address collaboratively, to help facilitate change towards a prosperous future for all.


Horizon 2030 contains three strategy themes (as illustrated below) with the Agribusiness industry being one of the three industries that will play a pivotal role in building and shaping the Macleay Valley Coast economy.

THEME 1:




Support the development of the Macleay Valley as an enterprising business and country lifestyle destination for investment, learning and employment

THEME 2:



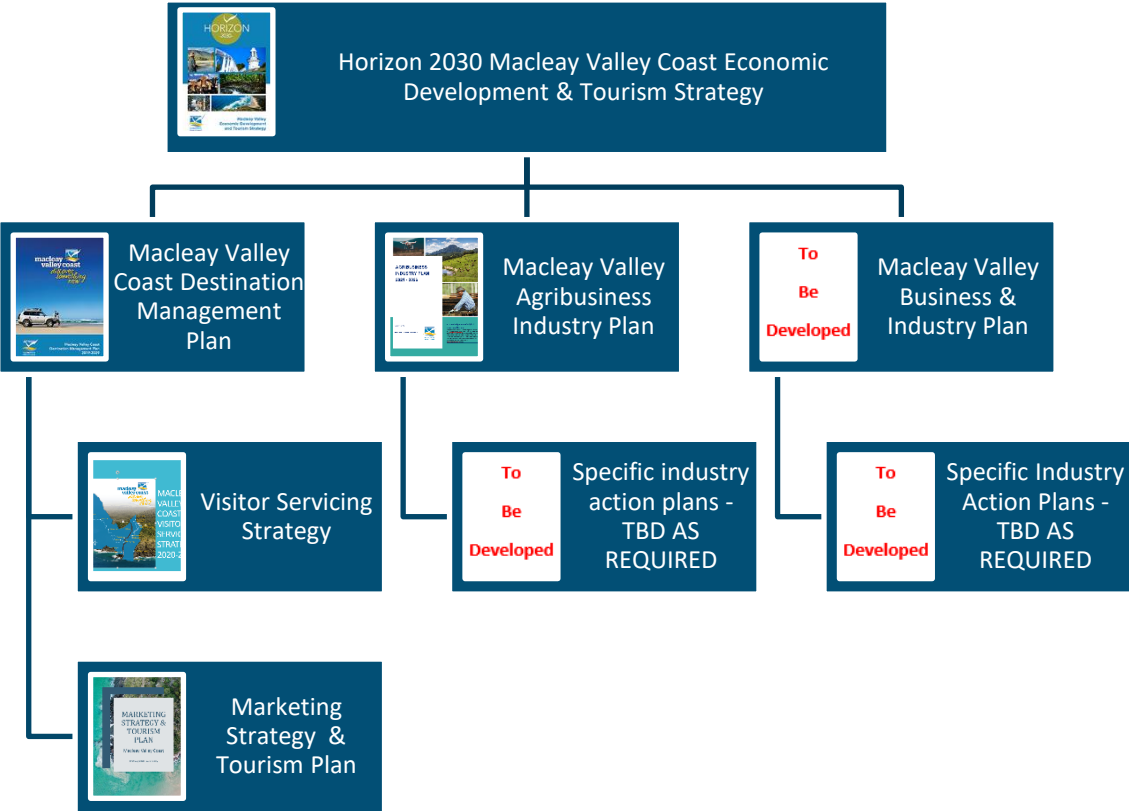
Support the Development of the Macleay Valley as a Location for Smart and Sustainable Agribusiness

THEME 3:





Support the Development of the Macleay Valley Coast as a Premier Regional Visitor Destination

A diagrammatic view of where the Agribusiness Industry Action Plan sits within the overall Macleay Valley Coast Economic Development framework is provided below:



Other Local Planning Documents

Strategy	Overview
<p><u>MV AGRIBUSINESS INVESTMENT GUIDE 2016</u></p> 	<p>An investment guide for agriculture in the Macleay Valley.</p>
<p>KEMPSEY SHIRE COUNCIL (KSC) BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY 2016</p> 	<p>A document that details the location, size and topography, climatic zones, and flora and fauna found within the Kempsey Shire Council (KSC). Note: this document is currently being reviewed and the 2021 draft is on exhibition</p>
<p><u>KSC DELIVERY PROGRAM</u></p> 	<p>Identifies the community's priorities, what Council can do to achieve the community's aspirations focused on land use planning and identifying opportunities to attract investment.</p>
<p><u>LOCAL STRATEGIC PLANNING STATEMENT</u></p> 	<p>A document that creates a 20-year vision for land use in local government, identifies special characteristics that contribute to local identity and recognises that shared community values should be maintained.</p>


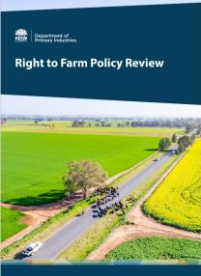
Strategy	Overview
<p><u>MACLEAY RIVER ESTUARY & FLOODPLAIN ECOLOGY STUDY</u></p>  <p>Macleay River Estuary & Floodplain Ecology Study</p> <p>Report to Kempsey Shire Council November 2010</p> <p><small>Public Service and Management in association with G&P</small></p>	<p>This study reviewed the ecology of the Macleay River estuary and its catchment.</p>
<p>INTEGRATED WATER CYCLE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY</p>  <p>Kempsey Shire Council</p> <p>Macleay Water Integrated Water Cycle Management Strategy Summary Report</p> <p>FINAL 2005</p>	<p>Integrated Water Cycle Management Strategy is currently being developed by Council.</p>

Regional Level Plans

Strategy	Overview
<p><u>NORTH COAST REGIONAL PLAN 2036</u></p> 	<p>The plan guides the NSW Government’s land use planning priorities and decisions to 2036. It provides an overarching framework to guide subsequent and more detailed land use plans, development proposals and infrastructure funding decisions. While a series of priority actions are included, medium-and longer-term actions will be identified to coincide with population growth and economic change. Specifically, the North Coast 2036 Regional Plan states that Kempsey Shire has a strong local economy underpinned by the agricultural sector, which supports a number of major manufacturers like Nestle and Akubra Hats, and the ‘Macleay Valley Food Bowl brand’. The Plan identifies an action to ‘support the growth and diversification of the shire’s agricultural base by leveraging the strength of the dairy and cattle sector to encourage new opportunities for agribusiness and associated manufacturing and transport’.</p>
<p><u>HASTINGS MACLEAY REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2018-2022</u></p> 	<p>A regional economic plan that identifies agriculture, tourism and manufacturing as key engines of growth. In 2015-16 these are the leading export industries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accommodation & Food Services \$256m - Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing \$144m - Manufacturing \$113m <p>One of key risks identified was that challenges of population growth and an increased urban footprint needs to be managed effectively to sustain the quality of region’s agriculture, industry, and natural environment.</p> <p>Specifically, the <i>Hastings Macleay Regional Economic Development Strategy 2018-2022</i> states that the Hastings Macleay’s leading exporting industries are Accommodation & Food Services (the leading \$256m), Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing (\$144m) and Manufacturing (\$113m). It further states that the Region’s ‘Engines of Growth’ are industries such as agriculture, aquaculture, food and clothing manufacturing, tourism, forestry, logistics and specialised equipment wholesaling.</p> <p>The Kempsey Regional Saleyards Infrastructure Program is listed as one of the potential projects under ‘Foster Industry Development by Further Leveraging the Region’s Endowments’.</p>
<p><u>PATHWAYS INTO AGRICULTURE REPORT - RDA, MID NORTH COAST 2016</u></p> 	<p>An analysis of the challenges facing and opportunities that exist for the agricultural sector along the North Coast.</p>

Strategy	Overview
<p><u>CHARACTERISTIC OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE OF THE NORTH COAST REGION 2015</u></p> 	<p>This report provides a socio-economic snapshot of the region’s communities and an analysis of the significant agricultural industries to inform the investment and resource allocation decisions of the North Coast Local Land Services.</p>
<p><u>NORTH COAST REGIONAL STRATEGIC WEED MANAGEMENT PLAN 17-22</u></p> 	<p>The plan sets out the responsibilities of Local Land Services for Weeds in the North Coast including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - delivering regional strategic weed management plans - facilitating and coordinating regional strategic planning - assisting with education and community outreach programs.
<p><u>NORTH COAST CLIMATE CHANGE SNAPSHOT 2014</u></p> 	<p>The North Coast Region is projected to continue to warm in the near future (2020–2039) and far future (2060–2079), compared to recent years (1990–2009). The warming is projected to be on average about 0.7°C in the near future, increasing to about 2°C in the far future. The number of high temperature days is projected to increase, while a reduction is anticipated in instances of potential frost risk.</p>

NSW State Plans

Strategy	Overview
<p>DEPARTMENT PRIMARY INDUSTRIES STRATEGY 19-23</p> 	<p>Building stronger Primary Industries in NSW across nine programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maximise our connection with communities, industries and people - Increase productivity and profitability of plant and livestock systems - Enhance the productive and sustainable use of agricultural resources - Protect and enhance the biosecurity of NSW - Maximise food safety, animal welfare and market access in NSW - Promote the sustainable growth of commercial and recreational fishing, and aquaculture - Protect and enhance NSW aquatic resources and environment - Manage hunting and the sustainable growth of forestry - Drive research and business excellence in DPI.
<p>THE RIGHT TO FARM POLICY 2020</p> 	<p>The NSW Government will strive to increase certainty for existing agricultural use and promote innovation and investment in agriculture by addressing the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Long-term availability of productive agricultural land 2. Making it easier to set-up and conduct business 3. Reducing land use conflict and supporting dispute resolution.

Federal Plans

Strategy	FEDERAL PLANS AND STRATEGIES
<p><u>FUTURE FORCES - AGRIFUTURE</u></p> 	<p>This report was written and produced by Institute for the Future (ITF) and Agthentic Advisory to promote thinking and preparation based on five social, environmental, and technological future forces, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Viral disinformation in the food system * Interconnected digital infrastructure * Rewiring the grid * Domesticating the cell * New geographies of climate change
<p><u>AGRICULTURAL COMPETITIVENESS WHITE PAPER</u></p> 	<p>The Australian Government is strengthening the Primary Industries sector. Stronger farmers mean a stronger Australian economy. This paper outlines the opportunities that the Federal Government is focusing on to continue to strengthen this industry, in Australia because as a country it is;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * on the edge of the strongest growing region in the world * has a developed agriculture sector * has world-class food safety and environmental credentials * possess modern technology * has a strong economy and employs skilled labour.
<p><u>REGIONAL TOURISM AUSTRALIA</u></p> 	<p>Over the last five years the number of agritourists visiting farms or wineries in Australia has grown significantly. According to data collected by Tourism Research Australia, between December 2016 and 2017 the number of Domestic farm gate trips increase by 65% and 81% for International overnight farm gate visits.</p>

Council's Role in Agriculture

In addition to developing and implementing the strategic planning framework and upgrading the Kempsey Regional Saleyards (which is detailed above), Council also plays a key role in supporting and growing the Agribusiness sector.

KSC plays an important role in supporting the development of the Macleay Valley as a location for smart and sustainable agribusiness to help drive industry diversification into new areas of Agribusiness and build on the Macleay Valley's comparative and competitive strengths.

Council's key function is to lead, deliver, support, facilitate and advocate on behalf of the Agribusiness community to foster sustainable economic development for this sector in the Macleay Valley.

Since the adoption of Horizon 2030, Council has strengthened its Agribusiness focus which has enabled Council to engage more extensively with local Agribusinesses and develop key partnerships with agencies and industry bodies to:

- advocate for and be successful in attaining funding to support recovery programs post 2019 bushfires and 2021 floods
- increase engagement with our Agribusinesses through face-to-face meetings, phone calls and emails allowing Council to be a source of trust and support for this industry
- conduct a Farm Resilience Program to help guide farmers in future planning for their businesses
- develop a dedicated Agribusiness newsletter every month to our database to distribute current and relevant information to assist Agribusinesses get the right information in times of disaster, be aware of training programs and current grants and funding applicable to them and any industry specific information that enables them to get information from one source
- develop strong relationships with government agencies and key industry bodies to help enhance, develop, and grow the MV Agriculture sector, for example the Oyster Growers Digital Literacy Program that began in September 2021
- lead the development and implementation of this Agribusiness Industry Plan to strengthen the future of Agribusiness in the Macleay Valley.



Macleay Valley Food Bowl



The Macleay Valley Food Bowl (MVFB) was created in 2015. It was developed to provide the Macleay Valley agribusiness sector with news, information, and contacts to stimulate supply and demand for food produced in the Macleay Valley Food Bowl precinct.

The program launched a website with a focus on the emerging organic sector in the region. The website was a one-stop shop for investors, chefs and local producers to find local produce, contacts and also host industry information for producers, however due to resourcing has not been sufficiently updated.

The MVFB logo is seen by many large-scale commercial producers as a niche marketing logo for small producers. A component of this plan will be to engage with local Primary Producers to get their feedback on how we can incorporate the whole KSC Agricultural industry within our branding.

Linking Agriculture and Tourism and Events

In recent times the number of agritourists visiting farms or wineries in Australia has grown significantly. According to data collected by Tourism Research Australia, between 2010-11 and 2015-16:

- The number of domestic tourists who visited a farm on their trip increased by 9% per annum on average, while the comparable number of international tourists increased by 11% per annum
- The number of domestic tourists visiting wineries grew by 13% per annum on average, while the number of comparable international visitors increased by 8% per annum.

In 2015-16, visitors who participated in agritourism activities spent \$9.4 billion on their total trip. This includes expenditure of domestic daytrip visitors - \$600 million, domestic overnight visitors - \$4.1 billion and international visitors - \$4.7 billion. It is important to note that these estimates reflect expenditure on the total trip, not just expenditure on Agritourism activities (*Australian Regional Tourism, 2017*).

Council aims to assist farmers to build and develop Agritourism and Events in the Macleay Valley through the sustainable and holistic development of agritourism product and experiences that encourage greater visitor dispersal.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES & STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Proposed guiding principles are designed to facilitate development of a sustainable agribusiness sector in the Macleay Valley have been outlined in Horizon 2030 and will form the basis of this plan:

Agribusiness Guiding Principles

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 1
Agribusiness Industry
Planning &
Development

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 2
Agribusiness Industry
Education & Research

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 3
Agribusiness Industry
Promotion &
Development

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 4
Agri-tourism and
Events

Agribusiness Strategic Priorities

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #1: Be Ready for Growth
Adapt to planning changes, infrastructure needs and environmental demands.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #2: Promote Production Excellence
Cultivate best management practices, research technology and education to sustainably grow the value of production

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #3: Embrace Innovation & Diversity
Embrace innovation to diversify product, introduce new initiatives and attract investment.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #4: Build the Macleay Valley Agribusiness brand
Promote the region and its agricultural products to raise investment opportunities and increase current production

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #5: Cultivate Agritourism and Events
Grow investment in agritourism and event initiatives to leverage visitor economy

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #6: Engage with Industry
Engage with industry to boost overall access to expertise and increase collaboration

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #7: Lead and Inspire
Coordinate leadership and resourcing to deliver a sustainable agribusiness sector

The strategic priorities outlined in this document are aligned with the *Horizon 2030: Macleay Valley Economic Development and Tourism Strategy* and are closely aligned with agricultural industry trends and practices. The strategic priorities ensure agriculture is front and centre of our planning, investment, promotion and engagement. It will focus on providing a pathway to increase the value of the agricultural economy within our region, to enhance the reputation and profile of the Macleay Valley, encourage our producers to embrace innovation and diversity through education and production excellence and to provide exceptional experiences for our visitors.

The Agribusiness Industry Plan was developed by aligning to *Horizon 2030* and utilising the consultation findings, constraints and opportunities collated through the following methodology:

- **Desktop Review**
- **Targeted Agricultural Stakeholder Interviews**
- **Industry Group and Government agency engagement**
- **Resilience Workshop participants**
- **Macleay Valley Economic Development Strategy engagement**

The consultation findings, constraints and opportunities from this methodology is outlined in detail in **Appendix 1**.

KEY ACTIONS

The implementation of the Agribusiness Industry Plan will be a multi-year deliverable involving ongoing research, monitoring and review to ensure new and emerging industry trends are considered.

The action plan below relies on a collaborative multi-agency, stakeholder and partnership approach to Agribusiness within the Macleay Valley. The success of delivery of this plan in accordance with the indicative timeframes provided below is dependent on the ongoing collaboration/alignment with the State and Federal Government agencies, industry bodies and key stakeholders as well as the ability to access the appropriate resources and grant funds to implement.

Key Partners in implementing the Action Plan include:

- *Kempsey Shire Council (KSC)* - Commercial Business, Community Partnerships, Strategic and Asset Planning, Infrastructure Delivery, Development and Compliance and Water and Sewer.
- *Government Agencies (GOV)* – Including but not limited to Regional NSW, Training NSW, Local Land Services, Department of Primary Industry, Department of Education, Department of Agriculture, Department of Education, Skills and Employment and Regional Development Australia
- *Research and Development Corporations (RDC)* – Wine Australia, Cotton Research and Development Corporation, Fisheries Research and Development Corporation, Grains Research and Development Corporation, AgriFutures Australia, Australian Egg Corporation Limited, Australian Meat Processor Corporation, Australian Pork Limited, Australian Wool Innovation Limited, Dairy Australia Limited, Forest and Wood Products Australia, Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited, Meat and Livestock Australia, Sugar Research Australia Ltd.
- *Education Providers (EDU)* – Country University Centre, TAFE, Universities, Schools

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- *Industry Groups (IG)* – Including but not limited to National Farmers Federation, Australian Dairy Farmers, Australian Chicken Growers' Council, Australian Forest Products Australia, Australian Chicken Growers' Council, Australian Livestock & Property Agents Association, Australian Organic Ltd, Australian Pork Limited, Australian Veterinary Association, Corporate Agriculture Australia, Farmers for Climate Action, Cattle Council of Australia, Cotton Australia, Goat Industry Council of Australia, Grain Growers Ltd, Kangaroo Industry Association, NSW Irrigators' Council, Ricegrowers' Association of Australia Inc., Soils for Life, Wool Producers Australia (WPA), NSW Farmers, CWA NSW.

ACTION PLAN

Strategic Priority #1: Be Ready for Growth											
Adapt to planning changes, infrastructure needs and environmental demands.											
Action ID	Action	Timeframe for Delivery					KSC Role				Partners
		2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	Deliver	Facilitate	Advocate	Participate	
SP1.1	Advocacy on policies and strategies impacting Agribusiness in the Macleay Valley.								✓		GOV, RDC, IG
SP1.2	Advocate to ensure land use regulations meet industry needs and support Agribusinesses in the Macleay Valley.								✓	✓	GOV, RDC, IG
SP1.3	Review and provide comment on the Local Environmental Plan as required to ensure the intensification and diversification of Agricultural production is supported in the region.						✓		✓	✓	GOV, KSC
SP1.4	Advocate for and support infrastructure development and emerging opportunities for our agricultural businesses.							✓	✓	✓	GOV

Strategic Priority #2: Promote Production Excellence

Cultivate best management practices, research technology and education to sustainably grow the value of production.

Action ID	Action	Timeframe for Delivery					KSC Role				Partners
		2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	Deliver	Facilitate	Advocate	Participate	
SP2.1	Advocate & develop research & development partnerships to identify & unlock economic opportunities for Agribusiness in the Macleay.								✓		RDC, GOV, EDU
SP2.2	Facilitate linkages between Macleay Valley Agribusinesses with innovation opportunities and regional research facilities to identify regional research and development requirements and opportunities.							✓			IG, EDU
SP2.3	Encourage Agricultural best practices by linking businesses to education and training opportunities.							✓	✓		RDC, GOV, IG, EDU
SP2.4	Investigate and educate Agricultural businesses on technological advancements for example digital literacy and new farming techniques.						✓	✓	✓	✓	GOV, EDU, RDC

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #3: Embrace Innovation & Diversity

Embrace innovation to diversify product, introduce new initiatives and attract investment.

Action ID	Action	Timeframe for Delivery					KSC Role				Partners
		2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	Deliver	Facilitate	Advocate	Participate	
SP3.1	Establish a technical reference group – to help drive innovation and provide access to specialist expertise.						✓	✓			IG, GOV,KSC
SP3.2	Build links between growers and sellers by identifying supply and demand chains and communicate and promote to industry by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identifying and realising existing and potential areas of regional competitive advantage and link with other businesses - Link with other information portals 							✓		IG, GOV, RDC,	
SP3.3	Council to develop a Macleay Valley Investment Prospectus, making sure to include the following Agricultural topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New land available for Agriculture - Alternative land uses - Our strategic location regionally - Our key commodities - The importance of Agriculture as a driver of economic growth - Diversification and value add of current Agricultural businesses - Large-scale production attraction 						✓			KSC	

Action ID	Action	Timeframe for Delivery					KSC Role				Partners
		2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	Deliver	Facilitate	Advocate	Participate	
SP3.4	Encourage and attract investment in support of infrastructure that adds value to Agricultural productions such as the Kempsey Regional Saleyards, transport networks, food processing operations and packaging hubs.						✓	✓	✓	✓	KSC, GOV, RDC
SP3.5	Identify and leverage export opportunities (exports domestically and internationally) by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working with local producers to provide linkage to successful co-op models and help promote for this region. - Identifying and dispersing information to Agribusinesses on how to sell their produce locally, domestically and internationally. Leverage from state and federal government export programs.							✓	✓		GOV, IG, RDC
SP3.6	Commission an Agribusiness Cluster Strategy to develop our emerging capabilities.						✓	✓			KSC

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #4: Build the Macleay Valley Agribusiness brand

Promote the region and it’s agricultural products to raise investment opportunities and increase current production.

Action ID	Action	Timeframe for Delivery					KSC Role				Partners
		2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	Deliver	Facilitate	Advocate	Participate	
SP4.1	Rebrand Agriculture in the Macleay Valley to include all Agricultural businesses and update the website content to inform our Agricultural industry and attract investment.						✓	✓			KSC
SP4.2	Identify the value proposition for the Agribusiness industry in the region and create a marketing and communication plan to promote the region’s leading industry investment opportunities.						✓				KSC
SP4.3	Promote awareness and identity of Macleay Valley producers and exporters regionally and Nationally through industry events, the Investment Prospectus, social media, Agricultural newsletter and the Kempsey Shire Council website.						✓	✓	✓	✓	KSC, IG, GOV, EDU
SP4.4	Work with Agribusinesses to assist in the preparation of competitive applications for grants and funding to raise the profile of Agriculture in the Macleay Valley.						✓	✓			GOV, KSC
SP4.5	Capture stories of successful Agricultural businesses and promote as part of the Macleay Valley through our website, newsletters and social media.						✓	✓			KSC
SP4.6	Promote Agribusiness as an important driver of economic growth.						✓				KSC, GOV, IG

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #5: Cultivate Agritourism and Events

Grow investment in agritourism and event initiatives to leverage visitor economy

Action ID	Action	Timeframe for Delivery					KSC Role				Partners
		2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	Deliver	Facilitate	Advocate	Participate	
SP5.1	Develop an Agritourism plan that focuses on sustainable growth within the sector, defines the barriers constraining farmers and regions from developing tourism, identify and share practical solutions where barriers have been overcome, define the product gaps in the market.						✓	✓			KSC, GOV
SP5.2	Identify and disperse capacity building tools to inspire farmers to diversify their business into Agritourism.						✓	✓		✓	KSC, GOV, IG
SP5.3	Build a reputable food tourism destination with increased availability of food tourism experience through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developing a Macleay Valley Food Trail - Delivery of capacity building workshops - Connecting the food producers with the buyers 						✓	✓			KSC, GOV, IG
SP5.4	Work closely with Agribusinesses to encourage diversification into new income streams through Agritourism.						✓	✓			KSC

Action ID	Action	Timeframe for Delivery					KSC Role				Partners
		2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	Deliver	Facilitate	Advocate	Participate	
SP5.5	Leverage from key regional and state Agritourism and industry events to host events for Agriculture in the region by utilising Macleay Valley's key infrastructure e.g. Kempsey Saleyards, Country University Centre, Slim Dusty Centre.						✓	✓			KSC, GOV, IG

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #6: Engage with Industry											
Engage with industry to boost overall access to expertise and increase collaboration											
Action ID	Action	Timeframe for Delivery					KSC Role				Partners
		2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	Deliver	Facilitate	Advocate	Participate	
SP6.1	Identify and disperse information and support available for employers to build their current workforce strengths and capabilities, address industry skills gaps, plan development opportunities and access training.							✓	✓		IG, GOV
SP6.2	Host industry workshops and events to create opportunities for local producers to network and information share.						✓	✓	✓		GOV, IG, KSC
SP6.3	Be the contact point and source of trust for our local Agribusiness industry partners and employers.						✓				KSC
SP6.4	Build direct relationships with Agricultural businesses and encourage information sharing and collaboration.						✓	✓			KSC
SP6.5	Facilitate industry workshops in collaboration with industry associations.							✓			IG, RDC
SP6.6	Promote environmental sustainability by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - investigating and sharing information with producers on sustainable and renewable farming practices - disperse training and awareness programs on identifying and controlling weeds and pests and on biosecurity. 						✓	✓	✓		KSC, GOV, IG

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #7: Lead & Inspire
Coordinate leadership and resourcing to deliver a sustainable agribusiness sector

Action ID	Action	Timeframe for Delivery					KSC Role				Partners
		2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	Deliver	Facilitate	Advocate	Participate	
SP7.1	Identify cross regional collaboration and project opportunities such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Disaster recovery - Group lobbying on Agribusiness policies - Industry specific projects 						✓	✓	✓		GOV, KSC
SP7.2	Integrate the delivery of Agribusiness initiatives and engender a whole of council approach to supporting agricultural initiatives.						✓	✓		✓	KSC
SP7.3	Be the main contact point and leading source of trust for our local Agribusiness industry partners and employers.						✓				KSC

APPENDIX 1 – STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

Consultation findings, constraints, and opportunities for agriculture in the Macleay Valley

Horizon 2030 developed a key objective to support the development of the Macleay Valley as a location for smart and sustainable agribusiness by creating an enabling environment to help facilitate the competitiveness and success of the Macleay Valley’s agricultural sector.

The four initiatives include:

1. **Agribusiness Industry Planning and Development**
2. **Agribusiness Industry Education and Research**
3. **Agribusiness Industry Promotion**
4. **Agri-tourism and Events**

This Agribusiness Industry Plan has been developed by the following methodology:

- **Desktop Review**
- **Targeted Agricultural Stakeholder Interviews**
- **Industry Group and Government agency engagement**
- **Resilience Workshop participants**
- **Macleay Valley Economic Development strategy engagement**

The Action Plan was developed by utilizing the consultation findings, constraints, and opportunities from the above methodology as outlined below.

1. AGRIBUSINESS INDUSTRY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

The industry needs strong planning and development strategies to rapidly expand the value of agricultural production in the region, this can be achieved by linking farming to research, employment, training and utilisation of flood plains. Consideration must be given to existing industries but also emerging capabilities in non-traditional industries, and review of land size and land use and how products are able to get to market.

Consultation findings and constraints

- The potential for conflict over increasing residential encroachment. Rural land is increasingly being purchased for lifestyle purposes which reduces the opportunities for agriculture and industrial land for processing.

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- Constant state and federal changes to policies affecting land use and land suitability and perceived lack of council, state and federal government support to for farm diversification, value adding and intensification of the agricultural industry.
 - There is discussion to promote intensive small-scale farming within the Macleay Valley accompanied by a need for a residential capability for small holdings.
 - Producers have expressed frustration about difficulties obtaining information about planning approvals for farm diversification, value adding and intensification. This perceived regulatory burden on agricultural development deters many landholders from pursuing new processing capabilities, agritourism or agribusiness opportunities.
 - Growers often face severe challenges in accessing markets and there was a recognition that they could be assisted by the establishment of co-operatives or central distribution points. There exists several active cooperatives or industry collectives, in dairy, seafood and cut flowers however there could be scope for more formal cooperatives that can provide greater levels of support through sharing of equipment, knowledge, labour, transportation and market access, in these and other industries, however many producers voiced their concerns on joining a co-op after previous failures in the region.
 - The lack of processing or packing facilities within the region means that the cost of supplying a product for market needs to be absorbed by the producer rather than creating an ability to share costs and efficiencies of scale that might be possible through distribution outlets.
 - Many producers identify the need to create the necessary infrastructure, such as storage, transport, food processing and packaging to drive industry development.
 - There are perceptions that there is an under-utilisation of agricultural land or that the quality of soil in some areas has not been improved over time. This is currently anecdotal there is no real data available on the quality of land under current agricultural production. Similarly, there is very little information available about what the real capability of land might be.
 - The establishment of more processing capabilities or manufacturers can drive a significant increase in value added capability and return on investment. Key employers and major processing and manufacturing businesses are already located within the shire however there is scope for new infrastructure and investment to increase agricultural capability.
 - No expert industry specific technical working group to guide certain aspects of development in the region.
 - Many businesses in the region do not have a focus on recycling or re-using materials. Non-traditional nutrient sources such as green waste and biosolids, are largely underutilised and expensive to dispose of.
 - Farmers are keen to learn more about practices that increase retention and recycling on farm and reduce the loss of nutrients and organic carbon to the environment, such as crop rotation, stubble retention, sustainable pasture management, livestock effluent re-use and composting.
 - Pest animals and weeds all cost landholders time and money to manage, and impact on productivity. The current resurgence of weeds following the bushfires and flood create a continual problem for farmers.
 - Producers often need assistance with biosecurity planning and the adoption of on-farm biosecurity measures. These often involve substantial time, cost and development of new procedures.
 - A substantial cost for producers is energy and there is a desire to better understand sustainable and cost-effective use of energy, including the uptake of energy efficiency initiatives and renewable energy sources.

Opportunities

- Increased access to expert advice on the perception of under-utilisation of agricultural land and partnerships can help to address this knowledge gap.
- Monitoring agricultural land use and review potential encroachments to preserve agricultural land. Council to be aware the issues of residential encroachment of agricultural and industrial land opportunities.
- Council to streamline process for advising producers and tracking development applications.
- Build relationships with government agencies, advocate for our local primary producers and continue to comment on policies and strategies on exhibition for review.
- Maintain strong advocacy for the agribusiness sector with government agencies, private organisations, commercial entities and research institutes.
- Monitor and review land size regulations and support policies to encourage intensive farming operations.
- Investigate options for small scale intensive farming that allows for residential dwellings on small lots.
- Increase interest in intensive enterprises on small lots that can utilise existing infrastructure previously used by dairy industry.
- Investigate distribution or cooperative models to create efficiencies for access to markets and begin a plan to assist in setting this up.
- Encourage value add capabilities on farm that can provide regional efficiencies for local producers through processing or packing facilities.
- Work with local producers to provide linkages to co-op models that have been successful in other areas.
- Facilitate development of new and emerging industry enterprises and encourage development of processing capabilities on farm.
- Conduct educational workshops for sustainable and renewable farming practices.
- Investigate agricultural waste recycling and develop projects to deliver additional income sources.
- More training and awareness programs working with the council Environmental Weeds Officer can build farmer capability to identify and control this problem of pests and weeds.
- Council to link to training and awareness programs to help to fill the knowledge gap on biosecurity.
- Provide a dedicated Agriculture Development Officer to facilitate the coordination of industry planning and development.

2. AGRIBUSINESS INDUSTRY EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

Education and research are key to continuous improvement, innovation and best management practice and thus growth within the agricultural sector. Access to educational opportunities for producers is lacking in this region and the need for suitable, relevant and region-specific training is evident. The region is also so diverse and agriculturally unlike many of our neighbouring regions and as such is a suitable location for innovative farming and research projects.

Consultation findings and constraints

- Lack of research and development being conducted in the region.
- Pathways to a career in agriculture for new farmers and school leavers are not well promoted or clear within the Macleay Valley.
- Lack of access to professional services to agricultural producers, such as agronomists and nutritionists.
- There are limited opportunities to network as a collective industry within the Macleay Valley.

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- Producers unable to access up to date research, local data, or industry information hence unable to determine the real value of agricultural production in the region.
 - Council unable to attain the real value of agriculture in the region because of outdated, incorrect and conflicting data.
 - Unable to access, lack of knowledge and funding for technical innovations and new models of operation.
 - Perceived lack of compliance with industry regulations and workplace health and safety by primary producers.
 - Want to continue to improve resilience and continuity planning for response to disasters.

Opportunities

- Advocate and develop research and development partnerships to identify and unlock economic opportunities, advance farm output and production quality, and investigate a long-term goal of an agricultural centre of excellence.
- Establish a Technical Reference Group to help drive innovation and access to specialist expertise through direct support to producers, developing new programs, connecting with research opportunities.
- Support new partnerships with the Country University Centre to offer agricultural studies.
- Work with Training NSW and local schools to promote agriculture as a career of choice.
- Educate local producers on the benefit of utilising professional services.
- Provide centralised communication with producers to disseminate information. Additionally, host field days or industry workshops and events to create opportunities for local producers to network and information share. This can provide an important forum to help solve common challenges or to explore innovations, and to ensure that our producers have an up-to-date awareness of regulations and compliance required on farm and are informed about ways to improve their soils, increase their water storage or increase their efficiencies. This is a critical step in increasing productivity levels, raising quality standards for agricultural products and attracting investment.
- Host workshops or forums to inform producers.
- Work closely with agencies and industry bodies to feedback the difficulties in trying to work with current data.
- Ensure primary producers have appropriate knowledge to access current technology methods.
- Increase awareness and training programs to build farmer capability farm planning and knowledge of industry regulations.
- Provide linkages to training and research to make farms more resilient to disasters.
- Provide a dedicated Agriculture Development Officer to facilitate industry education and research.
- Encourage farmers to test new methods as pathway to future investment or employment.

3. AGRIBUSINESS INDUSTRY PROMOTION

The region is not renowned for being a prominent agricultural region, however it possesses a strong agricultural sector. There is a need for agricultural promotion within the region to attract investment in on and off farm agriculture and to drive industry development. The region needs to be revered as an agricultural hub with a strong local brand that is respected both locally and nationally.

Consultation findings and constraints

- There is a need for benchmarking and real data to include in an Investment Prospectus to continue to develop agriculture in the Macleay Valley.
- Little is known about the products and producers of the region and agriculture has a low profile.
- The branding of the region – Macleay Valley Food Bowl (MVFB) is not up to date and does not adequately reflect the industry in the region.
- Agricultural producers find it hard to access or understand grant funding applications.
- It is perceived by primary producers that Council does not promote and/or support agriculture in the Macleay Valley.

Opportunities

- Use established from previous actions in this strategy to gain data on value of agricultural production to inform promotional material, contribute to an investment prospectus and to build awareness of agricultural value to government and private sector.
- The collective understanding of the value of our local agricultural production can all play a role in the growth and promotion of our industry.
- Raise the profile of the agribusiness sector through marketing, communication, and media campaigns.
- Update MVFB webpage and re-brand to be seen as a commercially viable, inclusive agricultural brand.
- Work with producers to assist in the preparation of competitive applications for grants and funding.
- Council to engage with producers face to face, on the phone and over email.
- Be consistent in marketing to assist Primary Producers i.e., Facebook, newsletters, training, and workshops.
- Capture stories of our industry champions and progressive farm elders to younger generations.
- Provide a dedicated Agriculture Development Officer to facilitate industry promotion.

4. AGRI-TOURISM AND EVENTS

Agritourism and events in the Macleay Valley is a significantly untapped opportunity for our region's economy. Agritourism has an important role in creating a direct connection between the primary producers and the end consumer. For primary producers, it provides an opportunity to diversify; supplement their income and market their produce through alternative channels, often attracting a premium price, or capturing margin that would otherwise be captured elsewhere in the food value chain, whilst gathering valuable direct feedback from end consumers about their produce and emerging consumer preferences.

Consultation Findings and constraints

- There is little to no agritourism in the region.
- Producers not aware of what is permissible on farm that would appeal to visitors.
- The NSW North Coast is the region with the most farm and farm gate visits across Australia, but the Macleay Valley Coast is not contributing to this.
- Producers are not encouraged to diversify income through farm stays, and / or farm gates.

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- There are no agricultural specific events such as festivals and field days.
 - Perceived lack of community restaurants and community demand and / or outlets for locally grown food.
 - Not enough accommodation options on farm to meet visitor demand.
 - Lack of opportunities or education on direct sales for associated food and beverage producers.
 - Food growers are often challenged by the regulatory reforms, strategy and policy for agritourism.

Opportunities

- The region is a tourist hub with 674,000 tourists visiting the region each year, mainly visiting our beaches, activating agritourism would increase these numbers and increase the spend of the tourists when here.
- Develop a regional strategy that summarises the directions needed to sustainably grow the sector, define the barriers constraining farmers and regions from developing tourism, identify and share practical solutions where barriers have been overcome, define the product gaps in the market.
- Leverage the Destination NSW Food and Wine strategy.
- Work closely with the Tourism specialist within council to ensure we have a target market for Agritourism and raise the profile of the region to this target market.
- Work to market locally produced food at restaurants to attract visitors and increase their experience when in region.
- Create capacity building tools to inspire farmers to determine their involvement in agritourism and assist them to develop competitive and sustainable agritourism.
- Encourage local producers to develop food and farmgate trail that links with Macleay Valley Coast tourism initiatives.
- Work closely with producers to encourage diversification into new income streams, such as function centres, farm stay experiences, craft breweries, alcohol distilleries, honey producers etc.
- Collaboratively work with equine groups, agents and the Council planning and development team to better support the need for equine facilities to encourage equine events in the region.
- Agricultural and Tourism Development Officers working together to create an agri tourism strategy

APPENDIX 2 – RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

References of documents viewed in the compiling of this report

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