



# Agri-Food Plan

## 2023-2026

# Acknowledgement of traditional owners

The City of Whittlesea recognises the rich Aboriginal heritage of this country and acknowledge the Wurundjeri Willum Clan and Taungurung People as the Traditional Owners of lands within the City of Whittlesea. We pay our respects to elders, past, present and emerging.



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### COVER IMAGE

Melbourne Wholesale  
Fruit Vegetable and  
Flower Market, Epping

### LEFT

Djirri Djirri dance group

# Executive summary

The City of Whittlesea Agri-Food Plan 2023-2026 (Plan) provides direction for investment attraction and growth in the agri-food sector within the City of Whittlesea, with the objective of growing and strengthening the sector to increase value-add, innovation, local employment and future readiness.

The agri-food sector presents strong potential for growth. In 2021-2022, the key agri-food industries of agriculture, agriculture and fisheries support services, and food and beverage manufacturing contributed to a total output in the municipality of \$1,519.8m (8.4 percent of total output). This contribution supports 3,477 jobs (4.5 per cent of total employment) and generates value-adding of \$397.7m (4.8 per cent of total value-add).

It is important to recognise that this does not represent the full impact of the sector, which has indirect and direct contributions from other industries such as machinery and equipment manufacturing, packaging services, wholesale trade and transport and logistics. These impacts are difficult to quantify as the agri-food related components of these industries are often not able to be separated from the non agri-food components that serve other sectors.

The agri-food economy in the City of Whittlesea is now dominated by food manufacturing and associated logistics and distribution, support and service businesses. Agriculture was once the mainstay of the economy, but much of what was historically productive large-scale commercial farmland has now been transformed into smaller properties which are more suited to small-scale commercial farming. Remaining large-scale commercial farms and some small-scale commercial farms are generating income from wholesale, farm gate and market sales plus a small agri-tourism offering exists.

In recognition of the strength in agri-food, Federal and State governments are proposing to invest in new initiatives such as the Melbourne Food Innovation and Export Hub (MFIH) and the Australian Food Innovation Centre (AFIC), and have announced investment in the Beveridge Intermodal Freight Terminal (BIFT) to support growth of the sector into the future.

Background research and observations identified opportunities within the agri-food sector for the City of Whittlesea and from these, three priority areas have been identified as having the greatest potential for encouraging investment attraction and growth. A range of challenges for the sector within the City were also identified, including rising land prices, competing land uses, labour and skills shortages and industrial land supply shortages.

The three priority areas include:



## Food and Beverage

Our municipality is the centre of a rapidly growing and prosperous Melbourne's North Food and Beverage Hub



## Agriculture

A sustainable agriculture industry that contributes to the economy and liveability of our rural areas



## Education and Training

A preferred location for agri-food businesses because of access to an educated workforce; specialist training providers; world class research and development institutions; and technical and promotional support services

Each priority area includes a set of actions to be implemented over the next three years. These actions aim to support and encourage investment attraction and growth in the agri-food sector, which will contribute to increased local jobs, upskilling of businesses and employees to be future ready, strengthen advocacy efforts for key infrastructure projects and build the City of Whittlesea's reputation as the centre of Melbourne's North Food and Beverage and Distribution and Logistics Hub for agri-food products.

In summary, Melbourne's north is rapidly establishing itself as a hub for agri-food manufacturing, logistics and distribution, research and innovation, and higher education. Several opportunity areas were identified, and a set of priorities and actions developed which will be incorporated into higher level plans and guide Council's support for the agri-food sector over the next three years. With increasing demand for local food production and food security coupled with upcoming infrastructure investments such as the MFIH, AFIC and BIFT, there is strong potential to grow and attract new agri-food businesses to the municipality.

# About the Agri-Food plan

The City of Whittlesea will be home to world class expertise in agri-food innovation and research, supporting a thriving, growing and diversified agri-food sector in Melbourne's north.

The Plan outlines the City of Whittlesea's support for the agri-food sector. The objective of the Plan is to encourage growth, investment attraction and future readiness across the sector through increased awareness and demand for local agriculture and food products, targeted programs, advocacy and collaboration to support a strong local economy.

The Plan identifies the key current and emerging industries within the agri-food sector that present the most opportunity for facilitating growth and investment attraction. These industries include:



## Large-Scale Commercial Farming



## Small-Scale Commercial Farming



## Fast Moving Consumer Goods Manufacturing



## Start-Up Manufacturing



## Agri-Tourism



## Education, Training, and Research and Development



## Transport and Logistics

## How this plan supports the Strong Local Economy Strategy

The Plan is identified as a key action in the Strong Local Economy Strategy 2022-2026 to support the City of Whittlesea's agri-food sector to grow, attract investment and become future ready.

The Plan supports three key directions:



**Key direction 1:**  
Increase access to local employment



**Key direction 2:**  
Education opportunities for all



**Key direction 3:**  
Successful and innovative local businesses

The Plan directly aligns with the key goal of Council's 'Whittlesea 2040' vision: A Place for All including prioritising investment attraction and business growth which supports a strong agri-food sector. The Plan aligns with strategies and plans both internal and external including:

- Sustainable Environment Strategy 2022-2032
- Green Wedge Management Plan 2023-2033
- Climate Change Plan 2022-2032
- Water for All 2020-2030
- Biodiversity Strategy 2019-2029
- Destination Plan 2023-2026
- Economic Participation Plan 2023-2026
- Reconciliation Action Plan (under development)
- Strong, Innovative, Sustainable: A new strategy for Agriculture in Victoria 2020-2030
- Made in Victoria 2030: Manufacturing Statement.

# What does the Agri-Food sector encompass?

**‘Agri-food’ encompasses the entire value chain for agriculture and food products (for both humans and pets) from the point of production through to the point of consumption.**

It covers farming, food and beverage manufacturing, foraging/hunting, first stage value-adding manufacturers, distribution (wholesale, retail and export) and marketing. It spans cropping, horticulture, livestock production (including feral animals), fisheries and aquaculture.

Often the term ‘agri-food’ is used interchangeably with ‘agribusiness’. ‘Agribusiness’, however, focuses on the input and service industries of the agri-food sector including finance and banking, fertiliser and chemicals, machinery and farm advisory services.

The Plan focuses on key industries of the agri-food sector relevant to the City of Whittlesea, which includes agriculture, agriculture and fisheries support services, and food and beverage manufacturing.

A growing, future ready agri-food sector provides financial, health and social benefits through provision of local employment opportunities and attraction of new businesses to the municipality, access to locally produced and manufactured food, and support for a local food culture.

Building upon the City of Whittlesea’s reputation as being the heart of the Melbourne’s North Food and Beverage Hub will encourage new businesses to move into the municipality, attract investment into the sector and foster an environment of innovation and adoption of future technology, contributing to a strong local economy.

## The impact of the key Agri-Food industries to the Australian economy in 2021-2022



**\$86.59 billion**  
Directly contributed 4.7 per cent of Australia’s value-added GDP



**1 in 25 Jobs**  
Directly employed 550,000 people



**\$156.5 billion**  
Accounted for 11.1 per cent of Australia’s total exports



**1 in 15 businesses**  
There were 186,133 agri-food businesses

## Victoria’s Agri-Food contribution in the year ending June 2022 included:



Agri-Food exports valued at **\$41.87 billion**



Accounted for **27 per cent** of Australia’s agri-food exports



**42,031** agri-food businesses

Source: ABS, Australian Industry, Counts of Australian Businesses, ID, Economic Profile

# Achievements to date

In developing the Plan, it is important to recognise the work and activities that have helped shape the focus and intent of the Plan. These include:

- in partnership with Yarra Valley Water, Melbourne Polytechnic and Whittlesea Community Connections developed the Wollert Community Farm and Whittlesea Food Collective
- delivered workshops and events on topics such as biosecurity, future of agribusiness, grazing and pasture management and maximizing profit from grass fed beef
- in partnership with Deakin University, funded research into regenerative agriculture and its potential for enhancing climate resilience through its implementation in the peri-urban space and funded research into the future prospects of local agriculture in the City of Whittlesea
- advocacy to the Federal and State Government for the development of the Beveridge Intermodal Freight Terminal and the Melbourne Food and Innovation Export Hub
- continued support of the annual Whittlesea Agricultural Show
- continued support to the expanding Melbourne’s North Food Group.

RIGHT  
Costa Mushroom Exchange, Mernda



# Agri-Food sector snapshot

The City of Whittlesea agri-food sector has approximately 216 businesses and an output of \$1.5 billion, which directly contributes \$400 million of value into the local economy.

The agri-food sector is also estimated to represent 8 per cent of the value of the City of Whittlesea's total economy. It is noted that these figures underestimate the true size of the agri-food sector in the municipality as they do not include agri-tourism or industries along the supply chain such as machinery and equipment manufacturing, packaging services, wholesale trade, and transport and logistics, which are significant contributors to the sector.

The food manufacturing and agriculture industries have shown strong growth over the past five years. The growth in agriculture is largely due to the high commodity prices, particularly for beef and lamb (the main agricultural enterprises in the municipality) and favourable seasonal conditions.

As such, this does not accurately reflect the declining nature of the industry, which can be seen through the decrease in employment and number of businesses (11 per cent reduction from 2019-2022). The growth of the food manufacturing sector is universal across Australia, but small to medium enterprises, which are heavily represented in the City of Whittlesea, are growing at a faster rate. The City of Whittlesea has a strong food manufacturing economy with more than half of the manufactured food produced in the municipality being exported. Further, 3.2 per cent of Victoria's manufactured food is produced in the City of Whittlesea compared to 1 per cent for other Local Government Area's.

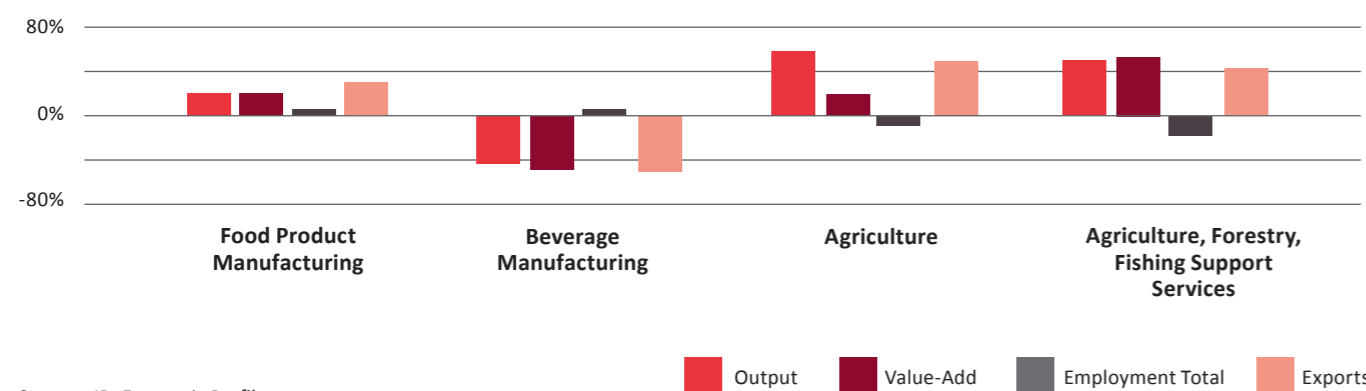
## City of Whittlesea

### 2021/2022 Key sector performance

Industry	Output \$M	Value-Add \$M	Employment Total	Exports \$M	CoW Value-Add % of VIC
Food Product Manufacturing	1,144.59	263.21	2,516	793.88	3.30
Beverage Manufacturing	59.42	17.83	136	12.82	1.60
Agriculture	299.24	110.96	788	66.48	1
Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing Support Services	16.6	5.7	37	2.6	0.70
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,519.85</b>	<b>397.7</b>	<b>3,477</b>	<b>875.78</b>	<b>6.60</b>

Source: ID, Economic Profile

### Percentage of change from 2017-2022



Source: ID, Economic Profile

## Industry analysis

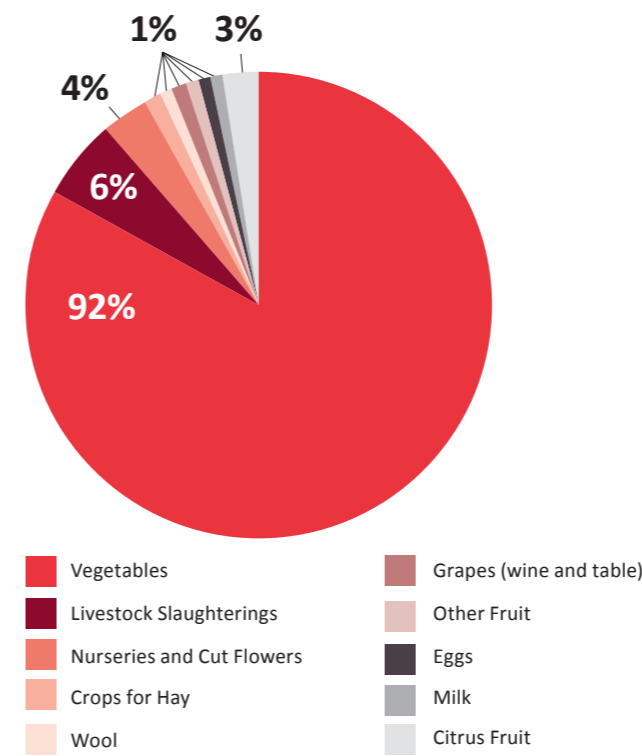
In 2020-2021, the total value of agriculture in the City of Whittlesea was \$92m<sup>1</sup>. The largest commodity produced was vegetables, which accounted for 92 per cent of the City of Whittlesea's total agricultural output. This is due to the presence of Costa Mushroom Exchange in Mernda, which is Australia's largest operating mushroom facility. Costa Mushroom Exchange is a major employer, creating almost 700 jobs (89 per cent of all agricultural employment in the City of Whittlesea) and supplying approximately 25 per cent of Australia's mushrooms. The facility is also nationally significant as it produces 40 per cent of Australia's mushroom spawn (critical to the production of mushrooms).

The remaining sectors are smaller in comparison, and primarily hold value due to commodity prices as opposed to industry size. Of the 1,579 rural properties in the municipality, there are only 30 of a size above 100 hectares, which is judged to be the notional threshold level for economic viability for a large-scale commercial dryland grazing operation. This presents an opportunity for the development of small-scale commercial farming operations as land fragmentation and rising land prices from historical and potential subdivisions have, and continue to, contribute to the decline of large-scale commercial farming operations.

It is also important to note that there are many Australian Business Numbers (ABN) registered to the municipality that are not based in the rural areas. As such, the value that is contributed from these ABNs to the City of Whittlesea's agricultural production may not necessarily be produced within the municipality, and therefore total value should be taken as an approximation.

Food manufacturing is a critical industry to the City of Whittlesea, being one of the top 10 employing industries in the municipality with a location quotient of 3.2, which indicates the industry is a major specialisation for the municipality (compared to 2 for the rest of Victoria). There are 79 active and registered for GST food product manufacturing businesses<sup>2</sup> with the highest number of businesses being non-factory-based bakery product manufacturing (27 per cent), cake and pastry manufacturing (factory based) (15 per cent) and other food product manufacturing not elsewhere classified (N.E.C.) (14 per cent).

### Agricultural production 2020/2021



Source: ABS, Value of Agricultural Commodities Produced (2022)

<sup>1</sup> Value provided for nursery production is from last available data (2017 Census).  
<sup>2</sup> This number may not represent all food product manufacturing businesses in the municipality as trusts, superannuation funds, non-active businesses and micro businesses not registered for GST have not been included.

### Food product manufacturing business breakdown 2022



Source: ID, Economic Profile

# Stakeholder consultation

The consultation process included interviews and discussions groups with 37 key stakeholders. Key themes that emerged are listed below and have been split into pre-farm gate and post-farm gate.

## Pre-Farm gate feedback:

- local traditional institutions are still highly valued by farming families
- council's support is valued but frustrations persist
- agri-tourism would be great but there is a need to seed development
- some feel the 'right to farm' is under threat
- commercial farmers feel that they are under siege.

## Post-Farm gate feedback:

- the vast majority of businesses in the City's food economy are small to medium enterprises
- logistics and labour are usually an advantage here
- a City of Whittlesea location is a legacy for most
- perspectives differ from north and south of the ring road
- interpretation of the role of local government varies.

Stakeholders consulted in the pre-farm gate industries e.g., agriculture, were quite focused on the tensions within the urban-rural interface and presence of lifestyle property owners. These tensions extended to frustrations over complaints by lifestyle property owners around agricultural activities being conducted, such as noise from machinery, odour from fertilizer and frustration over poor land and animal management. Feedback provided indicated a lack of understanding around the role of Council within the sector, with many focused on day to day issues which fall under State Government jurisdiction, such as kangaroo management, rather than Economic Development.

Post-farm gate stakeholders e.g., food manufacturing, noted that they have been experiencing strong growth which is presenting challenges in relation to space, location and labour, particularly for those businesses located in the older industrial areas. Stakeholders felt there are few opportunities for expansion within the municipality due to low numbers of 'turnkey' rental opportunities and the cost of industrial land and building expenses to build new premises. The connectivity to logistics was considered to be a positive, however very few had thought about potential opportunities to work with the educational institutions located within the municipality.



LEFT  
Wine in a Glass,  
Epping

RIGHT  
Five Vineyard, Mernda



# Policy context and key drivers

## Local

Local government can play an important role in supporting the growth and investment attraction into the agri-food sector through:

- partnerships with State Government on key initiatives
- providing networking opportunities to build business-to-business connections across industries
- collaboration with educational institutions and industry to address skills gaps and facilitate innovation
- advocacy for key infrastructure projects such as MFIK and AFIC
- continuation of support for progression of the BIFT.

The City of Whittlesea continues to support the agri-food sector through its four goals including:

1. Sustainable environment
2. Liveable neighbourhoods
3. Strong local economy and
4. Connected community.

The Green Wedge Management Plan 2023-2033 and Destination Plan 2023-2026 include actions that support the three strategic directions.

## State

The Agriculture Strategy vision is to support 'A Victorian agriculture sector that is strong, innovative and sustainable', and outlines five themes, each with their own commitments to achieve this vision. These include:

1. **Recover:** Recover from the impacts of drought, bushfires and the coronavirus pandemic and become an engine of growth for the rest of the economy
2. **Grow:** Grow the value and output of agriculture through increased exports, investment, greater diversification and new products
3. **Modernise:** Modernise Victorian agriculture through innovation, investment and future skills
4. **Protect:** Protect and enhance the future of agriculture by ensuring it is well-placed to respond to climate change, pests, weeds, disease and increased resource scarcity
5. **Promote:** Promote and build confidence in the sector to international markets and the community.

The Made in Victoria manufacturing strategy outlines a commitment to 'strengthening the advanced manufacturing capabilities of local firms by investing in technology adoption and upskilling the future workforce' and identifies industry priorities, in which food manufacturing is included. The strategy will help businesses capture emerging opportunities in a changing global environment, raise their productivity and create high-value jobs.

## Federal

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's (previously known as the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment) Delivering Ag2030 strategy goal is to increase agricultural production to \$100 billion by 2030 and outlines seven themes to support industry to reach this goal. These include:

1. Trade and exports
2. Biosecurity
3. Stewardship
4. Supply chains
5. Water and infrastructure
6. Innovation and research
7. Human capital.

The Department of Industry, Science and Resources (previously known as the Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources) Modern Manufacturing Strategy vision is 'For Australia to be recognised as a high-quality and sustainable manufacturing nation that helps to deliver a strong, modern and resilient economy for all Australians', and identifies the four pillars that will help achieve this vision, along with industry priorities, in which food and beverage is included. The four pillars include:

1. Getting the economic conditions right for business
2. Making science and technology work for industry
3. Focusing on areas of advantage
4. Building national resilience for a strong economy.

## Industry

Melbourne's North Food Group are an active and dynamic industry group which represents and supports food, beverage, and other fibre businesses across Melbourne's north by:

- providing strategic business reviews, employment programs and student placements, and export advice
- informing businesses of government grants and assistance
- working with industry to provide bulk buying deals
- coordinating stands at national and international trade shows
- connecting businesses to a variety of research and development options, and training and skills development workshops.

The Food and Agribusiness Growth Centre, Food Innovation Australia Ltd (FIAL) is a growth catalyst for the sector, leading and supporting the industry in its quest for cultural and transformational business change. FIAL work with the sector to grow the share of Australian food in the global marketplace through activities such as:

- delivering the FIAL sector competitiveness plan
- connecting businesses with research and development expertise through the Enterprise Solutions Centre
- improving access to international markets through trade missions and the Australian Food and Beverage Catalogue
- developing clusters across the value chain to unlock the \$200 billion potential for the agri-food sector.

Food Agility broker, design and deliver innovation programs for the Australian agri-food sector, ensuring maximum impact for investment. They specialise in using data and digital technology to increase profits and improve sustainability. Food Agility offers project management and innovation services that deliver real commercial outcomes for the agri-food sector. RMIT University is home to the Victorian Food Agility co-operative research centre (Food Agility CRC), known as the Victorian Innovation Hub. The centre focuses on the following research themes:

1. **Innovate:** Brokers innovative research, applying design-led and agile development methods, and sharing data in trusted networks, to create new digital technology and services that address challenges in the agri-food sector
2. **Educate:** Demonstrates the value of digital technology and are changing the way people work, helping to build a workforce for the future and increasing digital literacy across the agri-food sector
3. **Influence:** Showcases innovation methods and approaches to sharing data that can help all Australian industries to meet future challenges and lead the conversation about how to stimulate digital transformation in the agri-food sector.



LEFT  
Foodfx,  
Thomastown

# Opportunities and challenges



## Large-Scale Commercial Farming

Opportunities for growing large-scale commercial farming would involve a transition away from grazing operations and towards more intensive operations such as intensive horticulture (including protected cropping and viticulture), irrigated pasture and high value horticulture, and aquaculture. Diversification into agri-tourism including farm stays, farm cafes/restaurants, farm gate produce, self-pick and education experiences presents an opportunity for growth of large-scale commercial farming in its current form.

Without diversification or a transition into more intensive operations, large-scale commercial farming in its current form in the City of Whittlesea will continue to shrink due to encroachment from lifestyle properties and urban development, impact of climate change, an ageing workforce, and the opportunity cost of owning land on top of its associated costs.



## Small-Scale Commercial Farming

Growth opportunities for small-scale commercial farming are driven by building skills and awareness amongst lifestyle property owners in areas such as collective farming, protected cropping, inland aquaculture, bee keeping and direct-to-consumer marketing.

Growing demand for culturally appropriate food and indigenous bushfoods presents an opportunity for the development of small-scale commercial farms by the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Recent grant funding received by Melbourne Polytechnic will provide an opportunity for the integration of new and innovative technology to regenerate land for agricultural and horticultural purposes into their curriculum, which has the potential to facilitate increased availability of productive land and will build small-scale commercial farming viability and skills. Growth in this area could enhance local community access to food, build value for the local food economy and mitigate pending environmental and biosecurity risks from these properties.

With over 60 per cent of the municipality zoned for rural and agricultural purposes, lifestyle properties are both a valuable lost economic resource and an environmental and biosecurity risk in the City of Whittlesea. This is due to a lack of skills in food production, land and animal management, marketing and promotion and capital for infrastructure investment by property owners required to operate an agricultural enterprise.



## Fast Moving Consumer Goods Manufacturing

Melbourne's north is a nationally significant food manufacturing and distribution precinct, predominantly comprising family-controlled small to medium enterprises, although there are some large corporates and one or two multinational manufacturers. The prospects for the food manufacturing sector in the municipality are extremely positive.

Strong growth and expansion opportunities will create growing economic prosperity and employment. Actions to achieve this involve strengthening the City of Whittlesea's position as the centre of Melbourne's North Food and Beverage Hub. Attracting more food manufacturers and supporting businesses, driving local sourcing of inputs and services and championing Melbourne's North Food Group activities will support growth and foster business innovation.

Challenges faced by this industry include access to an appropriately skilled workforce, congestion and urban encroachment, rising operating and regulatory costs and a lack of suitable premises for lease or sale.



## Start-Up Manufacturing

Start-ups and small food businesses have great potential to drive municipal economic growth. Supporting the development of local start-ups presents more opportunities for future growth than investing speculatively to attract large businesses from outside the municipality.

With a strong CALD and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, there is a significant opportunity for production of culturally appropriate food and Indigenous bush food-based products in the City.

A healthy food ecosystem needs innovation to prosper and advance and this normally comes from start-up and micro businesses, rather than established manufacturers who are more risk adverse. Small businesses and start-ups often do not know how to connect to the right advice or investors to facilitate capital investment, creating barriers to growth.



## Agri-Tourism

There is great potential to expand the agri-tourism activity in the municipality through agri-tourism and food experiences in association with small-scale commercial farming, development and promotion of factory outlet stores attached to food manufacturers and further development of the Whittlesea Show and Monday Market. These opportunities are further explored, captured and being actioned as part of the Destination Plan.

Agri-tourism in the City of Whittlesea faces competition from other peri-urban areas such as the Yarra Valley and Mornington Peninsula, and lacks critical mass of tourism to sustain overnight destination traffic. Planning regulations in the green wedge area place some limitations on tourism opportunities and combined with a lack of networking and cross-marketing creates significant challenges.



## Education, Training, and Research and Development

Melbourne's north is well positioned to become a global centre of excellence in food science and innovation. The outlook for the education, training, and research and development industry is extremely optimistic with both La Trobe and RMIT universities planning significant investment in food innovation over the next few years, which will attract synergistic businesses creating employment growth.

Melbourne Polytechnic are actively working with industry and business to pursue innovative and sustainable education, and training products and initiatives, which presents an opportunity for business to access additional resources to achieve their goals and adapt to challenges.

Whittlesea Tech School collaborates with industry and business to create tailored learning experiences that enable secondary students to solve specific industry problems, get practical experience working within specific industries and visualise defined career pathways within Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM).

The proposed MFIX and AFIC projects, and announced BIFT, will exponentially grow the industry and put the municipality on the global map as a centre for agri-food education, training and research and development.

Currently, there is a lack of mutual understanding and a disconnect between education, training, and research and development support required by industry and that being provided by institutions, which is creating challenges and resulting in lost opportunities for local businesses to leverage this industry and for this industry to support growth in the agri-food sector.



## Transport and Logistics

The City of Whittlesea has a competitive advantage as Melbourne's North Distribution and Logistics Hub for agri-food products destined for local, interstate and export markets. The proposed MFIX project and announced BIFT will consolidate this position. There is an opportunity to capitalise on the accessibility to the northern transport corridor and connectivity to Melbourne airport.

Further, the Melbourne Wholesale Fruit, Vegetable and Flower Market is becoming an important national distribution centre for fresh produce and since being relocated to the Epping site, the focus of the market has shifted from trading to logistics, with much of the State's fresh produce flowing through the site enroute to supermarket distribution centres.

Most of the food manufacturing businesses in the municipality have warehousing and distribution for their products either at their production sites or nearby, however many are facing challenges of warehouse space shortages, and traffic congestion on narrow streets and main arterial roads onto the freeway system.

BELOW  
Feel Good Foods,  
Epping





## Priority areas

The priority areas for the Plan have been identified through consultation with stakeholders and consideration of target markets and industry trends, to respond to the opportunities and challenges and to support the activities of other City of Whittlesea plans including the Strong Local Economy Strategy.

The priority areas have been identified as areas with the greatest potential for further growth and development.

Actions developed as part of the Agri-Food Plan will:

- support future readiness and continued growth and investment attraction in the food and beverage manufacturing industry
- build upon the established food and beverage manufacturing ecosystem to attract specialist agri-food logistics and distribution businesses
- encourage a sustainable agriculture sector across both large and small-scale commercial business models
- collaborate with education and industry partners to upskill workers and drive innovation and best practice food and beverage manufacturing.

## Making it happen

The Plan will support actions that will result in identification of existing food and beverage industry activities in the City of Whittlesea, an increased number of agri-food businesses, improved future readiness and innovation capability and increased community support for and awareness of the local agri-food sector.

The Plan will support annual actions in the Strong Local Economy Action Plan over an initial three-year period commencing 2023-2024 and will be measured against three key directions aligned to the Strong Local Economy Strategy:

1. Increased local employment
2. Education opportunities for all
3. Successful and innovative local businesses.

## Glossary

**AFIC** – Australian Food Innovation Centre

**Agribusiness** – Refers to the input and service industries of agri-food including finance and banking, fertiliser and chemicals, machinery and farm advisory services.

**Agri-Food** – Refers to the entire value chain for agriculture and food products (for both humans and pets) from the point of production through to the point of consumption. It covers farming, food and beverage manufacturing, foraging/hunting, first stage value-adding manufacturers, distribution (wholesale, retail and export) and marketing. It spans cropping, horticulture, livestock production (including feral animals), fisheries and aquaculture.

**Agri-Tourism** – Refers to experiences attracting visitors to places where they get to interact with a variety of food and agribusiness elements such as farm gate sales, entertainment or educating the visitors, while generating income for the farm or business owner. In some areas this may involve consuming local products at cafes and restaurants.

**BIFT** – Beveridge Intermodal Freight Terminal

**FIAL** – Food Innovation Australia Ltd. This entity is responsible for The Food and Agribusiness Growth Centre which is a Federal Government industry growth centre to support the food and agribusiness sector

**Food Agility** – Federal Government co-operative research centre program that supports industry-led collaborations between industry, researchers and the community to focus on research and development towards use and commercialisation

**Large-Scale Commercial Farming** – involves the production of produce or food on a large scale with a focus on maximising productivity to meet market demand

**Melbourne's North Distribution and Logistics Hub** – Refers to the cluster of distribution and logistics businesses in the northern region of Metropolitan Melbourne

**Melbourne's North Food and Beverage Hub** – Refers to the cluster of food and beverage businesses in the northern region of Metropolitan Melbourne

**MFIX** – Melbourne Food Innovation and Export Hub

**Small-Scale Commercial Farming** – involves the commercial production of high value produce or premium food on a small scale or by specialised techniques, and with a clearly defined provenance

BELOW  
Viking Food Solutions,  
Epping



## Sources

Page 6: Sources ABS, Australian Industry, Counts of Australian Businesses, ID, Economic Profile

Page 8: Sources ID, Economic Profile

Page 9: Sources ABS, Value of Agricultural Commodities Produced (2022)

Page 9: Sources ID, Economic Profile

# References

## How this plan supports a Strong Local Economy Strategy

### Strong Local Economy Strategy 2022-2026

<https://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/about-us/news-publications/plans-strategies-and-policies/>

## Policy context

### Federal

#### Delivering Ag2030

<https://www.agriculture.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/delivering-ag2030-april-2022.pdf>

#### Make it Happen

<https://webarchive.nla.gov.au/awa/20220816062844/>  
<https://www.industry.gov.au/data-and-publications/make-it-happen-the-australian-governments-modern-manufacturing-strategy>

### State

#### Made in Victoria 2030

[https://djpr.vic.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/2108640/Manufacturing\\_Statement\\_Made\\_in\\_Victoria.pdf](https://djpr.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/2108640/Manufacturing_Statement_Made_in_Victoria.pdf)

#### Strong, Innovative, Sustainable: A new strategy for Agriculture in Victoria 2020-2030

[https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0005/612941/Strong-Innovative-Sustainable-a-new-strategy-for-Agriculture-in-Victoria.pdf](https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/612941/Strong-Innovative-Sustainable-a-new-strategy-for-Agriculture-in-Victoria.pdf)

### Industry

#### Melbourne's North Food Group

<https://melbournenorthfoodgroup.com.au/>

#### Food Innovation Australia Ltd

<https://www.fial.com.au/>

#### Food Agility

<https://www.foodagility.com/>

## City of Whittlesea Agri-Food sector snapshot

### Whittlesea, ID Economic Profile

<https://economy.id.com.au/whittlesea/>

## Literature review

### City of Whittlesea Community Plan 2021-25

<https://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/about-us/news-publications/plans-strategies-and-policies/>

### City of Whittlesea Green Wedge Management Plan

[https://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/media/10216/green\\_wedge\\_management\\_plan\\_2023\\_-\\_2033-adopted-version.pdf](https://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/media/10216/green_wedge_management_plan_2023_-_2033-adopted-version.pdf)

### Whittlesea 2040 A Place for All

<https://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/about-us/news-publications/plans-strategies-and-policies/>

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