

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

AGRICULTURE PORTFOLIO

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

19 May 2022



State of the sector – Agriculture

The past year saw agriculture further highlighted as a central pillar of Victoria's economy and vital part of our regional communities.



\$17.8 billion

gross value of agriculture production in 2019-20



144,000 jobs

in agricultural production and food manufacturing



21,700

agricultural business



11.3 M ha

of productive land used



27%

of total national food and fibre exports in 2020-21

Our achievements – Agriculture

Seasonal Workforce: Transitioning from COVID-19 response to sustainability

Supporting a vital workforce during peak harvest

- Through the Seasonal Sign-on Bonus, 3,883 local workers signed up for seasonal farm work, leading to nearly 120,000 days worth of labour
- We facilitated the entry and quarantine of over 2,470 pacific workers to fill needed roles in Victorian horticulture and meat processing businesses
- The Seasonal Workforce Program has transitioned to focus on strengthening workforce capacity, building accommodation, creating new traineeships – **responding to the needs of industry**

Biosecurity Response

- Japanese Encephalitis Virus
- Abalone Virus
- Anthrax

Our achievements – Agriculture

Diversification of Victoria's agricultural exports

\$5 million Pathways to Export program has helped connect farmers with international markets

- Vietnam +69%
- The Philippines +103%
- Belgium +340%
- Sri Lanka +135%

Legislative reform

- **New animal welfare legislation:** Work is progressing on the development of draft legislation for a new Act to replace the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act
- **Animal Activism Bill:** The Livestock Management Amendment (Animal Activism) Bill 2021 was passed by Parliament, protecting the health and welfare of animals on farms
- **Reuniting Pets Bill:** We passed legislation in February 2022 that will assist vets and animal shelters to reunite lost pets with their owners more efficiently
- **Agriculture Legislation Amendment Bill:** currently before the Victorian Parliament

Our achievements – Agriculture

Accelerating Victoria's agriculture sector response to a changing climate

- **Agriculture Sector Pledge - \$19.9 million** over 4 years to support the agriculture sector to respond to climate change and reduce its emissions
- **Achievements -**
 - flagship trials in pasture-based grazing systems
 - development of interactive online spatial tool
 - on-farm action plan pilot to deliver up to 250 farm action plans
- **Climate Change Adaptation Action Plans**, including the Primary Production Adaptation Action Plan 2022-2026 covering agriculture, plantation forestry, productive fisheries.
- **Victorian Agricultural and Climate Change Council**, has held 5 regional and 1 statewide roundtable with farmers and industry.



State of the sector – Forestry and Game

The Victorian forest and wood products industry has been Australia's largest for more than a decade.



24%

Of Australia's total log harvest volume in 2019-20



\$2.3B

Contribution to Gross State Product

Victoria has some of the best game hunting opportunities in Australia, supporting regional jobs and economic activity.



\$365M

Contribution from game licence holders



3,100 jobs

Jobs resulting from game hunting

Our achievements

Delivering the Victorian Forestry Plan

\$200 million to support workers, businesses and communities through their transition away from the native timber industry ahead of commercial timber harvesting ending in 2030.

Achievements

- **Forestry Business Transition Voucher Program:** Assisted timber industry businesses, with Round One fully subscribed and 41 vouchers issued.
- **\$25 million Timber Innovation Fund:** Provided \$2.5 million in business grants.
- **Local Development Strategy grants:** Grants approved for eight out of eleven affected communities to develop local plans for transition.
- **Gippsland Plantation Investment Program:** Commercial negotiations are underway for the expansion

Game – supporting sustainable hunting

- **\$5.3 million Sustainable Hunting Action Plan** – Released in December 2021 with a new set of actions to support sustainable, safe and responsible hunting.
- **Kangaroo Harvesting Program** – has enabled the sustainable, commercial harvesting of kangaroos in Victoria.

This budget – key Agriculture initiatives

We are growing a strong future for Victoria's world class producers, strengthening innovation and opportunities both globally and at home

Driving investment in the future of Victorian agriculture

\$12 million to boost the plant-based protein sector in Victoria

\$10 million Distillery Door Grants

\$2.9 million for Victorian Grown

- **Drink Victorian**
- **Vic House Shanghai**

This budget – key Agriculture initiatives

We are strengthening our communities to build resilience to future threats to Victorian agriculture industries

A collective biosecurity movement

- **\$1.8 million** to work with community and industry in delivering a collective biosecurity program, focussing on shared responsibility to support community-led action to manage pests.
- Joint emergency exercise training with industry and the promotion of surveillance and voluntary compliance through the development of a biosecurity citizen science toolkit

Climate Ready Agriculture

- **\$1.4 million** for co-investment in the extension of the Regional Drought Resilience Planning Program
- Drought Resilience Plans to identify and guide innovative actions that will build resilience to future droughts.

This budget – key Agriculture initiatives

We are continuing our ongoing commitment to better animal welfare, ensuring we keep protecting the animals in our lives

Animal care and protection

- **\$1.8 million** to support the continued development of the Animal Care and Protection Bill to replace the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986
- ***Every Pet Counts***: Victoria's first ever comprehensive pet census, providing an opportunity to better understand a fundamental shift in community attitudes regarding pet ownership
- **\$1.3 million** to develop a Victorian cat management strategy, including education campaigns and grant support to encourage cat containment and responsible cat ownership
- Support for animals and owners in need – funding for animal care organisations
- **\$11.5 million** for the new state-of-the-art, purpose-built **Ballarat Animal Shelter**
- **Taskforce on Rehoming Pets'** - \$2.7 million to implement the 17 recommendations of the final report

This budget – key Forestry initiatives

Strengthening the Victorian Forestry Plan (VFP)

As announced in late 2019, government is strengthening the VFP with an additional \$119.7 million, bringing the total support package to over \$200 million for the life of the VFP through to 2031-32.

The new funding will support 2022-23 initiatives to support affected businesses, communities and workers including:

- an **Opt-out Scheme** to enable a limited number of mills to exit the native timber industry in 2023
- a \$22 million **Community Transition and Development Fund** to support outcomes of the Local Development Strategies
- additional funding for round 2 of the **Forestry Business Transition Voucher** program
- \$20 million added to the **Victorian Timber Innovation Fund** to support business transition
- increases to the **Worker Support Package**, including worker redundancy top-ups, relocation payments and mental health and wellbeing support