

Agricultural Policy

Sustainable Economy and Communities



25 March 2026

This policy was adopted by Council to set governing principles in place that align with the following Strategies within the Strategic Community Plan 2025-35:

C4: Farmers and local businesses feel valued and can thrive in a supportive economic and regulatory environment that acknowledges our responsibilities to future generations.

C5: We are welcoming and inclusive to all, regardless of background and ability, and our multicultural community is enriched by Wadandi Pibelman culture and knowledge.

C6: The health, safety and resilience of our communities is supported through a coordinated approach of risk management, response and recovery.

E1: Natural landscapes are protected and managed to preserve and restore their biodiversity and cultural values.

W2: Our communication reflects integrity, care, and a commitment to building enduring relationships with our community.

W3: We actively listen, engage and collaborate with our whole community to better understand all perspectives to inform our decision-making.

W8: We ensure our processes, systems and services are fit-for-purpose and evolve to meet the diverse needs of all who use them.

Primary principle

The Shire of Augusta Margaret River is home to a diversity of highly productive agricultural enterprises, including livestock, dairy, viticulture and horticulture. Our producers vary in scale, with significant quantities of food and fibre and raw materials exported across the State and the country, and even into international markets. Agriculture within the shire is a vitally important contributor to food security, livelihoods, and local identity. This primary production underpins additional value-add enterprises, including the Margaret River region's esteemed wine offering, and supports a food culture leveraged by the tourism industry.

The Shire's aim is to protect, enhance, facilitate the development of, advocate for, and support local agriculture in all its forms; from small-scale local producers to larger export-oriented enterprises, recognising its economic, environmental, cultural and social value.

While recognising that some ancillary uses can complement primary production, the Shire seeks to retain the primacy of agricultural land-use on agricultural lots, utilising the Local Planning Scheme, Local Planning Strategy and other planning mechanisms.

This Agricultural Policy does not seek to replicate land use considerations made via these other mechanisms, but rather address other concerns raised by the agricultural community related to economic development and social outcomes.

Objective

The objective of this policy is to ensure the Shire's processes and decisions are supportive of a thriving and sustainable agriculture sector, from small-scale local producers to larger export-oriented enterprises that underpins food security, sustainable land management, and a sense of belonging for our valued farmers.

Application

The policy will be implemented at the operational level by the Administration, utilising an action plan created in collaboration with agricultural representatives. The policy is to be reviewed every three years.

Scope and limits

This policy is intended to guide the Shire's engagement, advocacy and internal processes relating to agriculture. It does not create additional assessment criteria or approval requirements beyond those established in statute, the Local Planning Scheme, or other adopted Shire strategies.

Respectful Engagement

The Shire undertakes engagement relating to agricultural matters in a respectful and inclusive manner, consistent with its Strategic Community Plan and adopted engagement frameworks. This principle, guides engagement processes only and does not introduce additional criteria for agricultural land use, development, compliance or operational decision making.

Policy Interpretation

The Agricultural Policy is to be interpreted in a manner that prioritises the objective of this policy which includes agricultural viability, productivity and economic development.

Transparency in Decision Making

Where it is identified that a decision specifically affects agriculture, the Shire will make every effort during the process to clearly explain the justification for the decision, with reference to the relevant statutory instrument or policy.

Definitions

Agriculture: Is a term used to describe unprocessed or processed agricultural products. These products include grains and flours, fresh and processed fruits and vegetables, meat and meat products, dairy products, natural fibres, sugar and wine. (Source ABARES)

Sustainability: Australian agricultural sustainability is the production of food and fibre which is environmentally, socially and economically responsible. Australia's environment and climate is unique and requires production systems and an approach to sustainability in tune with local conditions. (Source NFF)

Food and fibre: The resources derived from plants and animals that are used to sustain human life and provide materials for various products.

Policy

1. To support sound and informed decision making on matters that impact agriculture.

Foster communication avenues that build dialogue and trust between the agricultural sector and the Shire, including convening regular meetings with peak agricultural stakeholder groups via an Agriculture Reference Group.

Build the agricultural understanding of Shire staff and Elected Members.

2. To ensure agriculture and its farmers have a recognised and valued place within our diverse community.

2.1 Promote community awareness and appreciation of local food and fibre producers, considering a variety of means to ensure breadth of coverage in the community.

2.2 Support efforts to market and showcase the valuable and diverse agriculture of the region, such as via the Margaret River Agricultural Show, Margaret River Farmers Market, Margaret River provenance brand etc.

3. To support industry access to resources, infrastructure and professional development opportunities.

3.1 Support awareness of and access to capacity building, skills development, grant funding, research and development, and education programs.

3.2 Facilitate discussion and information sharing across the agriculture sector.

3.3 Advocate for training pathways to support the next generation of skilled farmers.

3.4 Communicate opportunities as they arise for utilising regional distribution infrastructure such as Busselton Airport and Bunbury Port.

3.5 Continue seeking opportunities to improve local roads where budget and grant funding allows, re-sheeting unsealed surfaces and managing vegetation and weed infestation within permitted environmental regulations.

3.6 Support 'paddock to plate' production and local value chains.

4. To foster a collaborative and supportive approach from government agencies and other key stakeholders.

4.1 Advocate to other tiers of government for greater investment in supportive infrastructure, including development of regional food and fibre processing facilities.

4.2 Engage industry expertise to advocate to all tiers of government to ensure regulation is well-informed fit-for-purpose and streamlined.

4.3 Support improvements that allow farmers to understand and easily navigate the local government regulatory environment.

4.4 Seek opportunities to collaborate with neighbouring LGAs where this will improve efficacy.

5. To encourage opportunities for agriculture which respect the environment and mitigate harm.

5.1 Support programs that build skills in ecologically responsible agriculture practices.

5.2 Encourage collaboration between environmental experts and agricultural sector to develop solutions to ecological threats.

5.3 Manage weed, pest and disease threats on local government land, while working collaboratively with private landholders, land care and industry groups, and government departments to support biosecurity management on non-Shire land.

6. To bolster the region’s credentials as a best-practice hub for sustainable agriculture.

6.1 Champion the region’s producers to showcase their commitment to sustainable farming practices.

7. To develop and implement an Agricultural Action Plan.

7.1 An Agricultural Reference Group will be established, comprising industry representatives.

7.2 The Agricultural Reference Group will inform the development of the Agricultural Action Plan, to implement the objectives of this Policy.

Relevant legislation

Local Government Act 1995

Related documents

- Strategic Community Plan 2025-35
- Local Planning Strategy 2036
- Local Planning Scheme 1
- Local Planning Scheme 2 (draft)
- Local Biodiversity Strategy
- Scott River Sustainable Economic Strategy 2020-2030

Document and version control table

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