

# FOOD. HEALTH. JOBS.

## GOOD FOR FARMERS, THE ENVIRONMENT AND CANBERRANS

Growing local food, rather than importing it from across the country, is good for farmers, good for the environment and gives local people more consumer choice.

But at the moment, the corporatisation of food production in Australia has created a food system that is vulnerable to climate change, unfair to farmers, sells food to Canberrans at exorbitant prices, while big supermarkets rake in record profits.

Australia's concentrated food supply chain means fresh food isn't so fresh by the time it's freighted all over the country, and this unnecessary long-distance trucking and shipping creates tons of greenhouse gas emissions.

The system encourages huge amounts of food waste, in our homes, in the stores, and on farms, where crops are sometimes left to rot if they're not cosmetically perfect enough for the big supermarkets.

Turning our food system around and increasing local production is one of the most powerful actions we can take to boost community health, protect against the climate crisis and bring greater transparency to our supermarket bills.

### THE ACT GREENS WILL:

- ▲ Establish a Food Hub for local farmers to set up a base of operations for food production and distribution
- ▲ Protect prime agricultural land so farmers have fair, long-term leases
- ▲ Provide interest free loans to empower local farmers
- ▲ Revitalise the Canberra City Farm
- ▲ Establish a farm training centre
- ▲ Fund five full-time-equivalent primary school garden coordinators, to support school kitchen gardens
- ▲ Create new large community gardens for the suburbs.

**The full list of the ACT Greens' plans for food is listed below.**

## **PROTECT PRIME AGRICULTURAL LAND & PROVIDE SECURE LEASES FOR THE ACT'S FARMERS**

For too long the ACT's rural farmers have been treated as a static heritage landscape or land bank for destructive greenfield expansion, with the value of prime agricultural land eroded and the economic and other benefits of encouraging more sustainable local food production undermined.

Thanks to a culture of environmental stewardship, ACT's rural landholders protect and manage areas of high conservation value, but they have received little to no support for their efforts and have not been actively supported by the ACT Government to grow food and connect directly to the Canberra community.

The ACT Greens will change this. We will establish a prime agricultural land zoning, based on research undertaken for the [Canberra Region Local Food Strategy](#). We will make sure the Government conducts a rapid and transparent review of rural leasing arrangements. Priority will be given to providing secure, long-term leases to support sustainable enterprises, as well as fair, streamlined costs for establishing extra family homes on leases to support farm succession.

We will review Land Management Agreements to provide a whole farm plan, integrating farming business, biosecurity and conservation goals, also providing the basis for financial incentives for conservation stewardship,

where relevant (see the ACT Greens plan to [reward conservation on private leasehold](#)).

The ACT Greens will also incentivise the implementation of regenerative agricultural practices through consideration of discounted government rates, fees and taxes, and fund Agricultural Extension Officers to support rural landholders to increase their sustainability and profitability.

### **INVESTMENT:**

- \$1 million per year for four years for agricultural extension.
- Other policy changes will be achieved within existing government resources.

## **ESTABLISH THE ACT LOCAL FOOD TRAINING CENTRE & A FOOD DISTRIBUTION HUB**

We will fund the creation of a local food training centre. The centre will provide onsite training for people wanting to learn how to be a successful local grower or allied enterprise.

There will be a specific stream of training and jobs provided for people experiencing barriers to employment, such as those at risk of entering or returning to prison, people recovering from addiction and people who have experienced - or are at risk of - homelessness.

Such training spaces and jobs will be funded via federal agricultural skills and apprenticeship places, and existing ACT Government funding for combatting recidivism and unemployment. There will also be links to existing courses, and

formal CIT course recognition will be pursued for the training centre programs.

This is a proven model, with similar programs overseas having achieved over 80% employment rates for graduates over many years.

We will also investigate co-locating a food hub with a farm training centre. The food hub will provide a purpose-built space for produce aggregation, storage, processing, value-adding and distribution.

This will support local growers to be able to sell direct to local wholesale and retail businesses, as well as to community services such as aged care, and to individual people and families via food box systems and more.

The food hub will also provide community education and training spaces, and provide office space and a home base for key local food and allied community organisations. For example, Canberra Seed Savers would be able to securely store and expand their local seed bank.

A site plan and investigation will be needed to look into where a food hub can be appropriately co-located.

### **GETTING FRESH LOCAL FOOD TO THOSE WHO CAN LEAST AFFORD IT**

Modelled on long-term successful farm training and distribution hubs overseas, the ACT's hub will specifically supply the food grown by the training centre to community food banks, charities and people on low income, to immediately increase access to fresh vegetables and fruit for Canberrans experiencing food insecurity and poverty.

### **INVESTMENT AND RETURNS:**

- \$3.5 million to establish the training centre and food hub, with job training and apprenticeship places funded via federal skills grants and apprenticeships, and subsidised where appropriate by ACT justice reinvestment programs.
- Fresh food supplied to community food relief providers will reduce their costs and enable them to help more people.

### **REJUVENATE HERITAGE AGRICULTURE SITES**

To support the training centre and spread its impact across greater Canberra, the ACT Greens will invest in the revitalisation of key ACT Heritage farms such as Lanyon Homestead, Mugga Mugga Cottage and Horsepark Farm as satellite farm enterprise incubators.

These sites will allow people to access affordable land to incubate their enterprise locally, at strategic locations across Canberra.

One site, most likely Mugga Mugga Cottage given its significant First Nations heritage, will be developed in collaboration with the Ngunnawal community as a dedicated site to support the development of local Indigenous foods to commercial viability, and the establishment of First Nations-led food enterprises.

These sites will also be able to support members of Canberra's multicultural communities to trial growing culturally important and hard to get foods,

including establishing local growing enterprises.

### **INVESTMENT:**

- \$1million establishment costs and \$400,000 over four years for site management.

### **INTEREST FREE LOANS FOR PROJECTS THAT SUPPORT LOCAL FOOD**

These loans will support the many people with innovative ideas in our community to create a truly carbon-positive local food system.

Examples of this already exist in Canberra, ranging from zero-emission local food distribution transport logistics, to establishing cross-lease cooperative farming models, to food waste reduction and up-cycling projects on-farm.

The loans will be trialled over a year with a long lead time, to allow for the development of well-designed and tested projects that benefit multiple actors in the food chain.

### **INVESTMENT:**

- \$100,000 for administration and interest payments.

### **USE MORE PUBLIC LAND TO GROW MORE LOCAL FOOD**

A consistent barrier to greater local food production either by enterprises, charities, community or neighbours is the difficulty of knowing what local public land is available and suitable; yet it is clear to anyone that drives around

Canberra that there is a significant amount of public land not being used or maintained.

Making these spaces known, and offering them for food growing, will increase local food production, create jobs and boost local community amenity and wellbeing.

The ACT Greens will ensure these spaces are identified and mapped and the information is publicly available. We will establish a fair licencing system and, where needed, amend urban zoning permissions to allow urban farmers and community groups to use these spaces to grow food.

We will also provide a government one-stop-shop for local food growing advice, including access to land and agricultural extension services that will be tenure-blind.

### **INVESTMENT:**

- This will be achieved through existing resources and the previous funding commitment for agricultural extension.

### **SUPPORT COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL KITCHEN GARDEN GROWING & AGRICULTURAL EXPERTISE**

Part of growing a strong local food system is providing spaces for everyone in the community to collectively learn and grow.

Giving children and adults alike access to hands-on experience growing and preparing food has overwhelmingly been shown to build better community cohesion. It provides children and adults

with food literacy skills to eat more healthily and actively participate in their local food community.

To foster this knowledge, the ACT Greens will train and fund five full-time-equivalent school kitchen garden facilitators over 4 years, for public primary schools.

We will provide foundational funding of \$100,000 per year to support community local food organisations that provide education, seedlings and seeds and expertise to the Canberra community.

This will include establishing a government research partnership with the University of Canberra Future of Food in the Canberra Region Initiative to provide ongoing applied research data and investigations to help grow the local food system.

We will also invest \$600,000 over 4 years to establish at least six new, large-scale community gardens in key suburbs that currently are missing out, in addition to continuing the Community Garden Grants.

### **INVESTMENT:**

- \$3 million over 4 years.

### **WHAT COMES NEXT**

Growing the food that ends up on our dinner tables locally rather than importing it from across the country is good for farmers, good for the environment and good for giving Canberrans greater choice to buy and support local businesses.

Already in Government, the ACT Greens have introduced Canberra's first ever

food strategy, setting out the framework for a sustainable and resilient food and agriculture industry.

Together with our suite of ambitious election initiatives to support local food, the ACT Greens have a plan to implement a transformative program of reforms which are good for farmers, good for the environment and good for the bank accounts of Canberrans.