

Rural Lands Issues Paper:

AGRICULTURAL TOURISM



CGRC Rural Lands Strategy
AGRICULTURAL TOURISM
Finalised October 2018

*This report was prepared by
Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council*

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1. Executive Summary

Agritourism represents a multi-faceted type of tourism development consistent with rural and agricultural areas including the Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council. Agritourism represents a substantial part of the visitor economy to rural and regional NSW.

The Council area includes agricultural, natural resource and other assets that are available to support the further development of agritourism.

Agritourism incorporates a range of activities and opportunities at a local and regional scale. Developing these opportunities is supported at varying levels by the public and private sector. In particular the local community are supportive of developing agritourism across the Council area.

To facilitate these opportunities Council needs to consider how to incorporate agritourism in its economic and tourism strategies planning, land use planning controls and operational activities. This Issues Paper provides guidance and recommendations that will actively promote agritourism in the Council area.

2. Introduction

Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council is the merged local government area of former Cootamundra and Gundagai Shires. The two towns of Cootamundra and Gundagai are the main population centres with a number of villages and rural communities also serving as residential options. All of these residential areas have strong existing and historical connections to the surrounding rural lands and the architecture and wealth of the towns in particular are directly attributable to the agricultural industry.

The total land area is 398,141.7 hectares, home to 11,141 people (ABS, 2016). Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing is the largest employment industry, employing 15.3% of employed persons. Manufacturing (which includes agricultural value add industries) is a close second, employing 10.6% of employed persons (*Census Time Series Profile 2011*).

In 2011 the combined value of agricultural commodities produced from the Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council Local Government Area was \$103 million, however this figure does not capture other agricultural outputs such as agritourism, local markets, events and so on.

Figure 1: CGRC LGA



Rural Lands Strategy Background

The merger of Gundagai Shire Council and Cootamundra Shire Council as Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council has stimulated the need for new planning instruments and policies; in particular a Local Environment Plan and Development Control Plan which cover the regional council area. A strategy to deal specifically with the rural lands of CGRC is proposed which aims to analyse agricultural trends and opportunities for the area. This strategy will help to update mapping for the new Local Environmental Plan while also providing rationale and reasoning for zoning and minimum lot sizes in rural areas.

Rural land is often neglected from a planning perspective due to more pressing planning needs in larger centres, however agricultural land often has a disproportionate impact on residential and economic activity when compared to development in a town, with intensive feedlots, quarries, landfills, etc. Furthermore, agricultural activities themselves such as piggeries, vineyards, feedlots and so on have a long-term impact on the use and viability of the site and surrounding lands. Through the strategic planning process, controls and principles of development can be placed on agricultural land to ensure the viability of the land into perpetuity as well as providing opportunities for emerging and new agricultural enterprises to establish in the area.

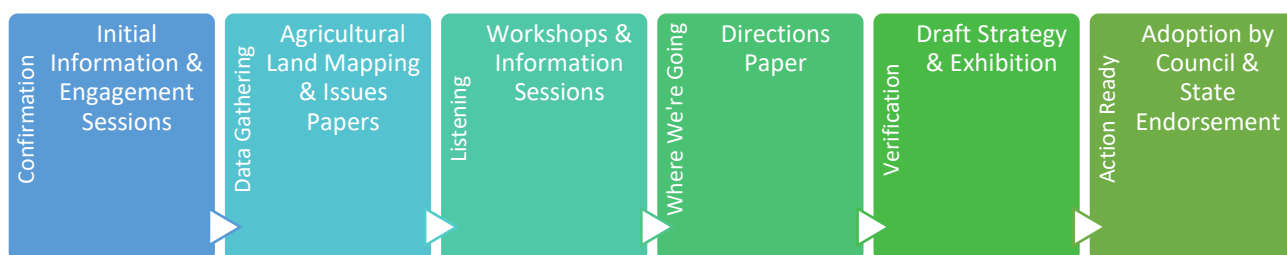
The two former shires have varied terrain and soil quality which makes formulating one course of action or plan for rural land difficult. However, this should be viewed as an opportunity which will make Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council more attractive and marketable to residents, visitors and prospective residents as a wide variation of agricultural pursuits can be explored in this single local government area.

It is Council's intention that the Rural Lands Strategy serves not only as a land use planning document, but as a plan for economic success and growth through the shared identity of agriculture. This leverages off what Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council does best (agriculture), connections to logistic hubs and routes as well as capitalising on changing recreation and tourism trends.

Purpose of the Issues Papers

The Issues Papers are integral to the success of the Rural Lands Strategy as they are background documents based on research and science; analysing trends elsewhere and juxtaposing this with the situation within Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council.

There are ten Issues Papers which will be produced with the community having shaped not only the overarching theme of each paper, but also having identified a number of existing constraints and opportunities to be investigated. Based on the findings of the Issues Papers and workshops during the “listening” phase, a directions paper will be produced which will list key directions for the Rural Lands Strategy.



3. Agricultural Tourism

3.1 Background

Definition

Often thought of as being simply farm stays and winery visits, the term agritourism encompasses a wide variety of activities where agriculture and tourism intersect.

Agritourism specifically involves people travelling to a region to visit a farm or food-related business, such as:

- Restaurants;
- Markets/events;
- Produce outlets; and
- Natural attractions.

People visit these attractions for enjoyment, education, or to participate in activities and events (*ART, 2018; Deloitte Australia, 2018; Ecker et al, 2010*).

Agritourism consists of a number of core activities that are directly related to agricultural production and marketing of farm products. There are also a number of peripheral activities that take place on a working farm but are unrelated to agriculture or are related to farming but do not take place on a farm.

Core activities consist of:

- Farm sales;
- Farm tours;
- Farm-to-table meals;
- Overnight farm stays; and
- Agricultural festivals on farms.

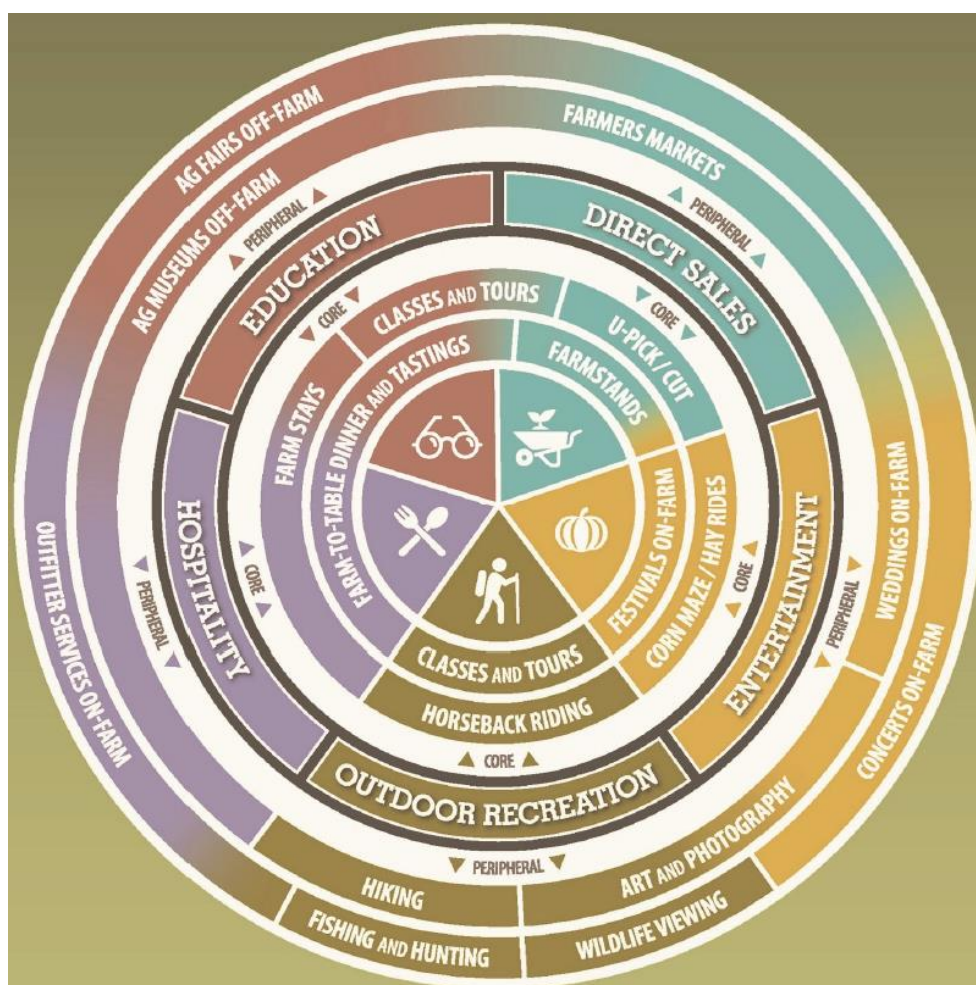
Peripheral activities consist of:

- Farmer's markets;
- Community-supported agriculture schemes; and
- Agricultural fairs and events on farms (weddings, concerts. etc).

Activities in both categories can be broadly defined into five categories:

- Direct sales;
- Education;
- Hospitality;
- Outdoor recreation; and
- Entertainment (*Chase et al 2018*).

Figure 2: Five categories of Agritourism including Direct Sales, Education, Hospitality, Outdoor Recreation and Entertainment, and Examples of Core vs Peripheral Activities



Source: Chase et al 2018

Agritourism creates a direct connection between primary producers and consumers. It provides opportunities for primary producers to supplement their income and market their produce via alternative channels while gaining direct feedback from consumers about the products (*Ecker et al, 2010*). Social benefits can be gained as the industry provides unique opportunities for women, Indigenous Australians and young people in rural communities to become involved in agriculture (*Ecker et al, 2010*).

In a regional context, agritourism creates a particular visitor drawcard that can be used to market the unique climate and natural resources of a region (*Deloitte Australia, 2018*). This may be especially attractive to regions that have suffered the decline of traditional agricultural industries and are looking to revitalise their economy (*Thompson, cited in Central Queensland University, 2016*). Agritourism is typically an additional enterprise added to the farm, integrating tourism into agribusiness (*Australian Regional Tourism Research Centre, 2009, cited in Ecker et al, 2010*).

3.2 Statistics

There is little specific data available on agritourism activity. The information that is available on agritourism trends and opportunities is found through tourism and agricultural industry data at a national, state, regional and local level.

National Statistics

Agritourism

Approximately 1.8 million domestic and international tourists visited Australian farms in the period 2015 – 2016, and this has grown by approximately 9% each year. The sector is currently worth approximately \$9.4 billion per annum, much of it in regions that are struggling to perform economically (*ART, 2018*).

Over the last five years the number of agritourists visiting farms or wineries in Australia has grown significantly. Between 2010 – 2011 and 2015 – 2016:

- 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; and
- 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.

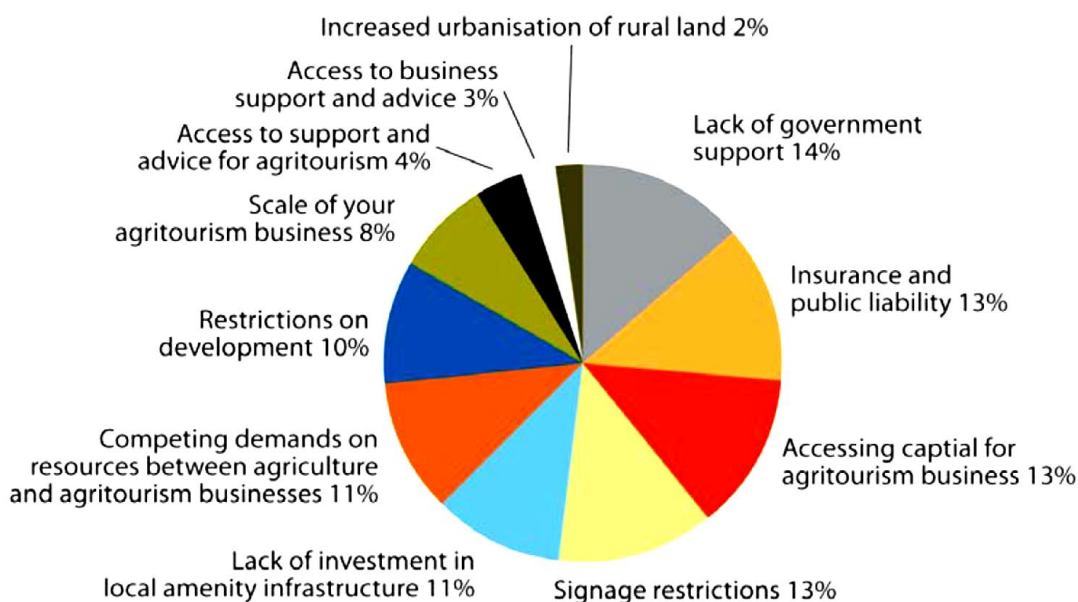
Combining domestic and international visitors, this represents an additional 1.8 million tourists visiting farms each year, and an additional 3.7 million tourists visiting wineries (*Tourism Research Australia, cited in Deloitte Australia, 2018*).

In 2015 – 2016, visitors who participated in agritourism activities spent \$9.4 billion in total on their 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 food and wine activities (*Tourism Research Australia, cited in Deloitte Australia, 2018*).

Ecker et al (2010) survey of 300 Australian agritourism operators found that in most circumstances, agritourism income was supplementary to farm income. However, 21% earned more than 90% of their income from agritourism. The average property size was around 60 hectares, indicating that small diversified farms are key contenders for agritourism and food tourism activities. *Ecker et al* also surveyed a number of Indigenous-led agritourism and food tourism businesses which were shown to be highly beneficial to local Indigenous communities.

Ecker et al 2010 survey also asked agritourism operators what barriers limited their business. The results are identified in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Perceived Barriers Affecting Agritourism



Tourism

Of the top five international visitor markets, China had the strongest growth to Australia during the year ending 2017, with visitor numbers up 12% to 1.3 million and total trip spend up 14% to \$10.4 billion. Chinese visitors were also the most popular country of origin with 1,251,000 visitors in 2017. India recorded the strongest growth during the year ending December 2017, increasing by 16% to 283,000 visitors. India also recorded the largest growth in trip spend, which increased 16% to reach \$1.4 billion (*Tourism Research Australia, 2018b*).

An interesting trend for domestic visitors is that the number of overnight trips involving outdoor activities rose last year, with record participation seen in the following activities:

- A visit to a National Park or State Forest, up 14% to 11.2 million;
- Bushwalking or rainforest walks, up 14% to 11.8 million;
- Water activities/sports, up 20% to 3.6 million;
- Attendance at an organised sporting event, up 11% to 3.9 million;
- Snow skiing, up 37% to 603,000; and
- A visit to an Indigenous site or community, up 22% to 465,000 (*Tourism Research Australia 2018a*).

While Australians may look for luxury in their overseas holidays, domestic holidays are more about the value of the experience. Domestic tourists prefer to stay with family and friends, or use mid-range hotels, motels, and serviced apartments. Despite this desire for value, accommodation costs have surpassed flights as the number one barrier to domestic travel (*Kantar TNS, 2017*).

State Statistics

Tourism

An online survey of tourists arriving at Sydney airport and travelling to regional NSW found that the major barriers to travel in the region were a lack of time (57%) and that the visitor was in Sydney for a specific reason and wasn't in a position to consider visiting regional areas of NSW (51%).

Access may also represent a barrier for regional travel for some visitors, with 26% of the online survey respondents disagreeing with the statement 'driving is easy and simple' and 17% disagreeing that 'there is good public transport'. More than 20% of the online survey respondents rated travel to regional NSW by train, coach or air as 'hard' or 'very hard' (*Tourism Research Australia, 2012*).

Domestic tourists arriving at Sydney airport and not travelling to regional NSW were also surveyed. Nine per cent said they would be very likely to consider visiting regional NSW if there were more travel packages available (*Tourism Research Australia, 2012*).

One in eight Australians already use share economy accommodation such as AirBnB when holidaying domestically, and it is expected to grow by 33% in the short term, as new users enter the market. (*Kantar TNS, 2017*).

Statistics for the Riverina Region

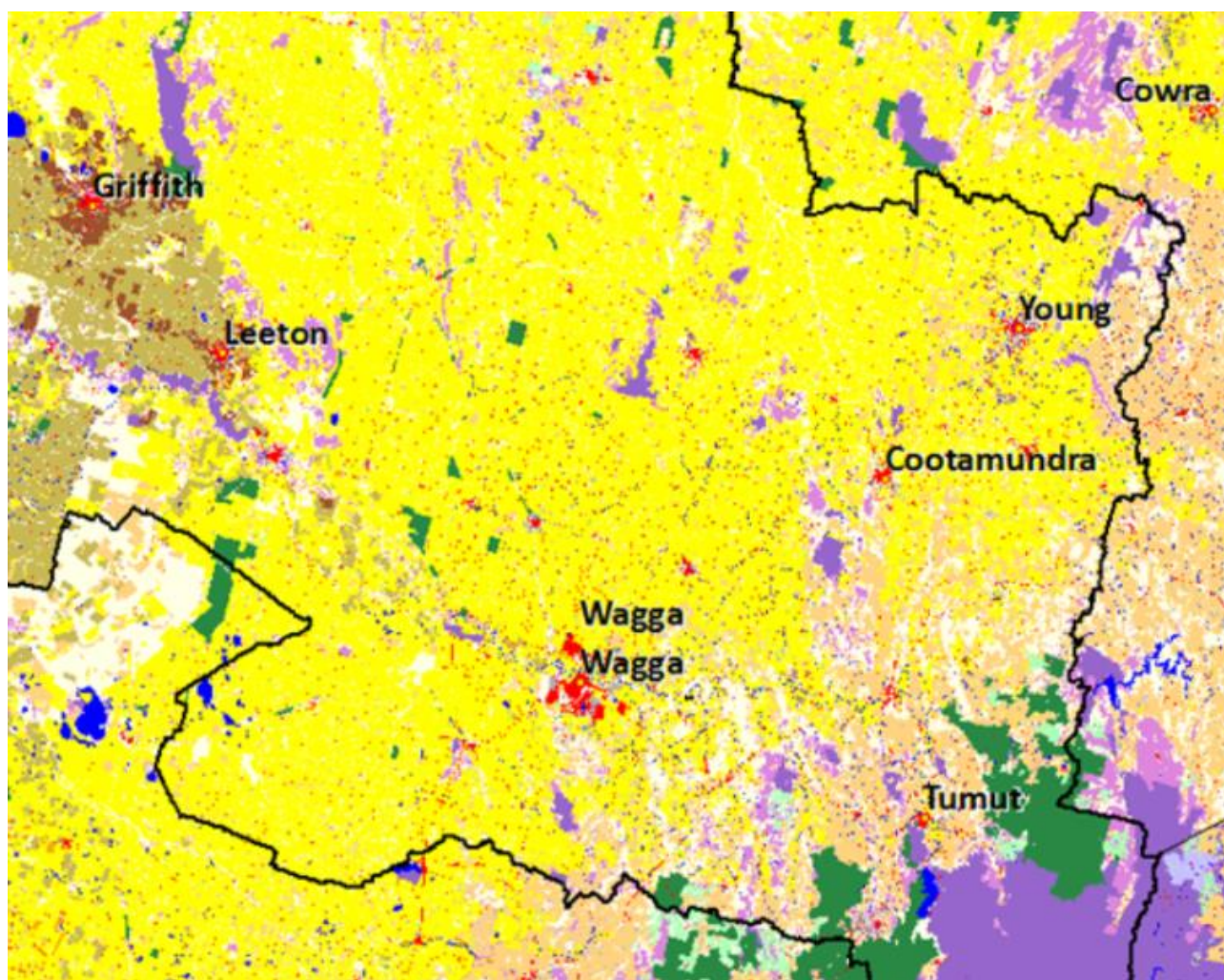
Agriculture

Of the 6.7 million hectares of land in the Riverina region, 43% is used for dryland cropping and 29% is used for grazing (Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES, 2018). Figure 4 summarises land uses across the Riverina region.

In 2016 – 2017, the gross value of agricultural production in the Riverina region was \$2.9 billion, which was 20% of the total gross value of agricultural production in New South Wales (\$14.5 billion) and 4.7% of the gross value of agricultural production in Australia (\$60.8 billion) (ABS, 2018).

The most important commodities in the region based on the gross value of agricultural production were wheat (\$632 million), followed by canola (\$288 million), cattle and calves (\$249 million), wool (\$222 million) and sheep and lambs (\$170 million). These commodities together contributed 10% of the total value of agricultural production in the region. In 2015 – 2016 the Riverina region accounted for 33% (\$22 million) of the total value of the state's almond production (\$66 million) (ABS, 2018).

Figure 4: Land Use Map of the Riverina Region



Key	Land use	Area (ha)	Share of region (%)
	Dryland cropping	2,902,427	43.27%
	Grazing native vegetation	1,967,151	29.32%
	Grazing modified pastures	474,671	7.08%
	Irrigated cropping	443,946	6.62%
	Nature conservation	318,104	4.74%
	Minimal use	175,598	2.62%
	Production native forests	151,654	2.26%
	Urban intensive uses	79,039	1.18%
	Water	46,829	0.70%
	Irrigated horticulture	45,518	0.68%
	Irrigated pastures	36,152	0.54%
	Rural residential and farm infrastructure	21,383	0.32%
	Plantation forests (commercial and other)	16,466	0.25%
	Other protected areas including indigenous uses	12,956	0.19%
	Dryland horticulture	6,547	0.10%
	Mining and waste	5,484	0.08%
	Intensive animal and plant production	4,303	0.06%
	Land in transition	209	0.00%
	Regional total	6,708,437	100.00%

Source: ABARES, 2018

In 2015 – 2016 there were 4,107 agricultural businesses in the Riverina (ABARES, 2018). Table 1 below breaks down the number of farms in the region by type.

Table 1: Number of Farms by Industry Classification, Riverina Region, 2014 – 2015

Industry Classification	Riverina Region		New South Wales	
	Number of Farms	% of Region	Number of Farms	Contribution of Region to State Total %
Other Grain Growing	1,070	26.1	4,454	24.0
Beef Cattle Farming (Specialised)	863	21.0	13,059	6.6
Grain-Sheep or Grain-Beef Cattle Farming	419	10.2	2,826	14.8
Sheep Farming (Specialised)	316	7.7	3,397	9.3
Citrus Fruit Growing	277	6.7	425	65.2
Grape Growing	276	6.7	756	36.5
Sheep-Beef Cattle Farming	267	6.5	3,053	8.8
Rice Growing	198	4.8	365	54.3
Dairy Cattle Farming	89	2.2	1,121	8.0
Horse Farming	87	2.1	1,405	6.2
Other	244	5.9	4,592	5.3
Total Agriculture	4,107	100.01	35,453	11.6

Source: ABARES, 2018

Tourism

The largest tourist market in the Riverina is domestic overnight visitors, who spent \$316 million in the region in 2017. Close to a million visitors make up this market.

Of these visitors 38% were from regional NSW, 18% were from Sydney and 44% were from interstate. Of these travellers, 37% said they came to see friends and relatives, 27% came on holiday and 24% came on business. Most commonly people stayed at a friend's or relative's house (45%), 25% stayed at a hotel or motel under 4 stars, and 9% stayed at a caravan park or camping ground. Young people aged 15 – 29 years made up the largest age cohort, followed by people aged 60 – 69 years (*Tourism Research Australia, 2018a*).

Domestic tourists on day trips make up the second largest tourist market in the Riverina, with 1.6 million visitors spending a total of \$201 million in the region in 2017.

Of these, 30% visited friends and relatives and 13% came on business. 'Eat out, dine at a restaurant or cafe' was the most popular activity undertaken by visitors to the region (50%), followed by 'go shopping for pleasure' (35%) and 'visit friends and relatives' (31.9%). This is a fast-growing market - domestic daytrips to regional NSW as a whole increased 16% in the four years between 2013 and 2017.

International overnight visitors make up a fast-growing section of the tourist market: 30,600 visited the Riverina in 2017, up 6.5% from 2016.

These visitors spent a total of \$46 million or \$1,503 per visitor. Regional NSW as a whole received 11% more overnight overseas visitors in 2017 than in 2016, and 43% more than in 2013. Of the 30,600 visiting the Riverina, 53% came on holiday, 21% visited friends and relatives and 10% came on business. The most popular countries of origin were the UK and New Zealand. However, the most popular regions of origin were Asia, closely followed by Europe. 38% were young people between 15 – 29 years of age. Similarly, to domestic overnight visitors, the most popular choice of accommodation was with friends or relatives. A point of difference in relation to domestic visitors is that a much higher percentage of overnight international visitors chose to stay in backpacker hostels. In total, 7,000 backpackers visited the Riverina region in 2017. Backpackers are classed as visitors who spent at least one night of their holiday in backpacker accommodation (*Tourism Research Australia, 2018b*).

Statistics for the South-West Slopes Economic Region

The South-West Slopes economic region identified by the NSW Centre for Economic and Regional Development encompasses Bland Shire Council, Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council, Hilltops Council, Temora Shire Council and Weddin Shire Council.

A Regional Risk Analysis (RRA) was conducted on key industries, including tourism, in the region as part of the background research for the South West Slopes Regional Economic Development Strategy. A summary of the RRA is provided in Table 2.

This analysis found that the main risks facing the tourism industry are the management of the region's natural assets and competition with other tourist regions for potential visitors. Disruptions to infrastructure and telecommunications were identified as key risks due to the impact on visitor's access to the region and affecting the enjoyment of their stay.

Table 2: Risk Analysis for the Tourism Sector in the South-West Slopes Region

Risk	Classification	Likelihood	Impact	Total
Disruption of key infrastructure	Economic Production	5	5	High
Increased cost of energy	Production	6	4	High
Disruption to telecommunication systems	Production	4	5	High
Increased transport costs	Economic, production	4	5	High
Shortage of skilled workers	Economic, production	5	4	High
Disruption to labour supply	Production	4	4	Med High
Disruption to energy supply	Production	3	5	Med High
Disruption to supply of resources	Production	3	4	Med High
Inflation impacts	Economic	3	4	Med High
Ageing population	Economic, societal	6	2	Medium
Climate change impacts and environmental degradation	Environmental, societal	5	2	Medium
Economic downturn	Economic	2	4	Medium
Change in state government priorities	Governance	4	2	Low Med
Changes in consumer demand and consumption patterns	Production	2	3	Low Med
Loss of markets to competitors	Economic	2	3	Low Med
Interest rate risks	Economic, production, societal	2	3	Low Med
Community conflict	Societal	3	2	Low Med
Appreciation of AUD	Economic	4	1	Low
Sovereign risks	Economic, Governance	1	2	Low

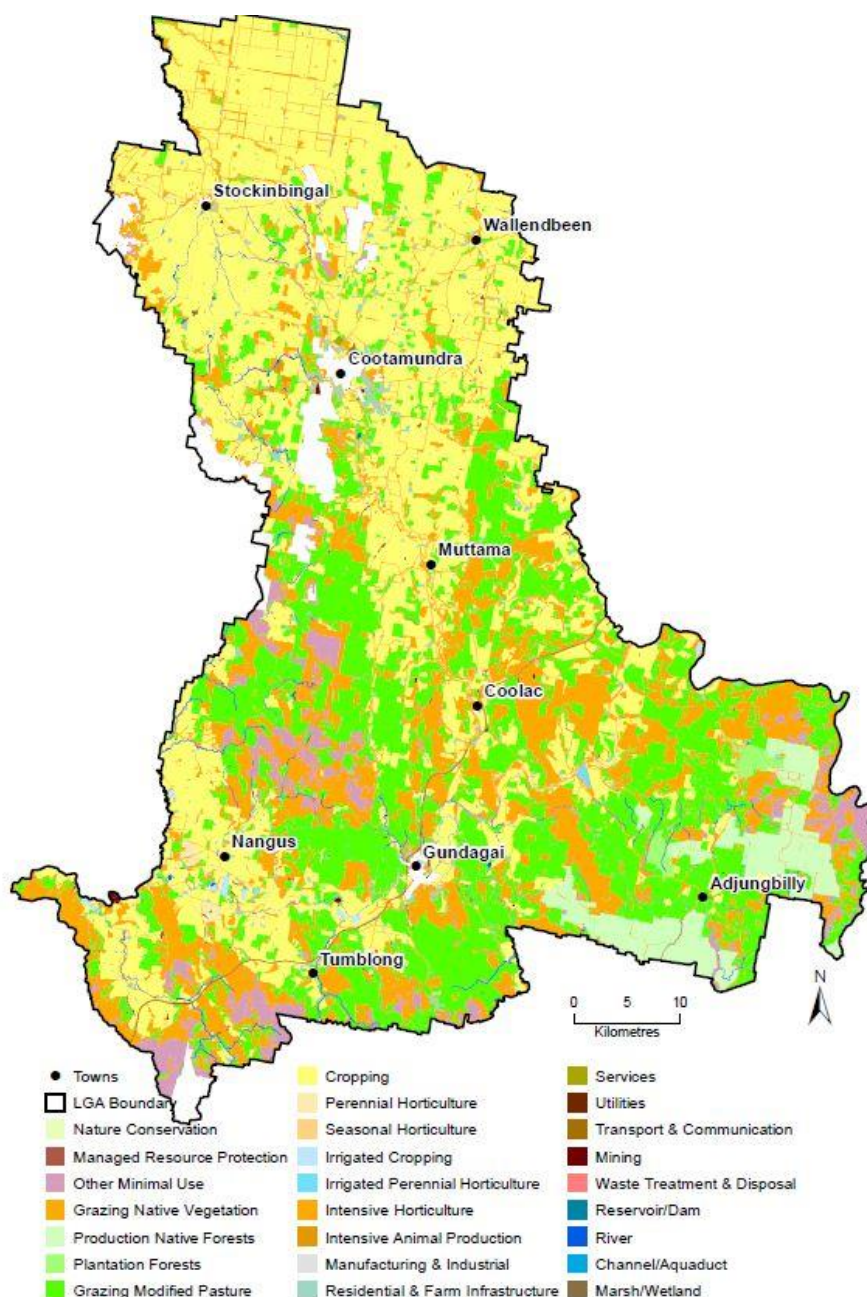
Statistics for the Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council Area (LGA)

Agriculture

According to *Australian Bureau of Statistics (n.d.)*, 7503.0, the total value of agricultural production in the CGRC LGA in 2010 – 2011 was \$102 million. The most valuable businesses are cattle and cereal crops which were each valued at \$23 million. The next biggest industries are wool (\$18 million), sheep and lambs (\$15 million), other broadacre crops (\$10 million) and crops for hay (\$5 million) (ABS, 2012).

Figure 5 shows the extent of agriculture in the CGRC region.

Figure 5: Land Use in the CGRC Region



Tourism

In 2016 there were 129 tourism businesses in the CGRC area. Of these, 46 were sole operators, 51 employed 1 – 4 people, 37 employed 5 – 19 people and none had over 20 employees (*Tourism Research Australia, 2016*).

In 2016, the local area received 2,000 international overnight visitors and 131,000 domestic overnight visitors. International visitors stayed an average of 19 nights while domestic visitors stayed an average of two nights.

Considering that the largest tourist spend in the Riverina is domestic visitors staying with friends, (*Tourism Research Australia, 2018a*), there are potentially 3,549 dwellings with spare bedrooms in the CGRC area. This estimate is based on the number of total dwellings (5,275) with an average of 2.14 persons per dwelling. (*ABS, 2017*).

Private accommodation markets, such as AirBnB, is expanding with the use of these types of private accommodation sites by international tourists visiting Australia growing by 12% in 2017.

Private accommodation now constitutes 8% of all international visitor nights spent in Australia. One in every 12 international visitors to Australia now uses private accommodation booking sites, twice as many as in 2016 (*Tourism Research Australia, 2018b*).

Use of share accommodation sites by domestic tourists is also on the rise. One in eight Australians already use share economy accommodation when holidaying domestically, and this is expected to continue to grow (*Kantar TNS, 2017*).

Industry

The 2016 census identified that there were 1,490 unincorporated business owners in the area earning a total income of \$35,916,121. The median age of business owners was 53 years old (*ABS, 2016*).

4. Legislation, Policy and Programs

As identified in this issues paper agritourism includes a range of activities and planning for agritourism in CGRC requires consideration of existing legislative and policy frameworks.

4.1 Legislation

Federal

At the national level a number of laws and codes that may impact agritourism operators, including:

- Competition and Consumer Act 2010;
- Australian Consumer Law (in Schedule 2 of the Competition and Consumer Act 2010);
- Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999;
- Illegal Logging Prohibition Regulation 2012;
- Model Codes of Practice for the Welfare of Animals;
- Horticulture code of conduct; and
- Food Standards Australia New Zealand Act 1991.

State

State legislation that may be relevant to agritourism businesses include:

- Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979;
- Water Management Act 2000;
- Water Act 1912; and
- Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979.

Local

The relevant local government planning controls in CGRC are:

- Cootamundra Local Environmental Plan (LEP) 2013;
- Cootamundra Shire Council Development Control Plan (DCP) 2013; and
- Gundagai Local Environmental Plan (LEP) 2011.

As part of the local planning review process commenced with the Rural Land Strategy, the Cootamundra LEP 2013 and the Gundagai LEP 2011 will be consolidated into a single new Cootamundra Gundagai Regional Council Local Environmental Plan covering the CGRC area. This will also require the preparation of a new Development Control Plan consistent with local planning directions at that time.

The Cootamundra Development Control Plan 2013 (DCP) does not contain many planning controls that are relevant to agritourism in the local area. The DCP restates the requirements stated in Clause 5.4 of the LEP in relation to the maximum number of bedrooms allowed in bed and breakfast accommodation and farm stay accommodation.

The Cootamundra LEP 2013 and Gundagai LEP 2011 have differing approaches to permitted and prohibited land uses in the RU1 Primary Production, RU4 Primary Production – Small Lots and the RU5 Village zones.

The Gundagai LEP 2011 takes an open zone approach while the Cootamundra LEP takes a closed zone approach to permitted land uses.

This means currently there is a greater variety of agritourism land uses permitted within zoned land under the Gundagai LEP 2011 around Gundagai, Tumblong, Coolac, Muttama and Adjungbilly. The opposite is the case for similar land zoned under the Cootamundra LEP 2013.

4.2 Organisations, Policies and Programs

A number of organisations, policies and programs are available to support the development of agritourism in Australia at a National, State and Local level.

National

A number of organisations and policies operate at the national level to guide and support the development of agritourism:

- [Tourism Australia](#) is the Australian Government agency responsible for attracting international visitors to Australia, both for leisure and business events. Their Tourism 2020 Strategy provides long-term goals for the Australian tourism industry, including growing demand from Asia, removing red tape for businesses and developing tourism transport capacity;
- [Taste Trails](#), an online listing of food and wine tourism operators, organised by state and region;
- [Australian Regional Tourism Ltd](#), the peak body that represents regional tourism practitioners;
- [Tourism Research Australia](#) (TRA) is a branch within the Tourism Division of Austrade. It provides tourism intelligence data across both international and domestic markets;

- The [Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences](#) (ABARES) is a research organisation within the Federal Department of Agriculture and Water Resources. It conducts research and provide advice on agriculture, forestry, fisheries and water. It is a rich source of information for primary producers, including agritourism operators;
- The [Australian Tourism Data Warehouse](#) is Australia's national platform for digital tourism information. It is jointly owned and managed by all Australian State/Territory government tourism bodies. Data includes product and destination information from all Australian States and Territories, with more than 40,000 listings;
- [AirBnB](#) is a site where individuals can advertise rooms or houses for rent. It has a website and a mobile app. It is used to advertise farm stay accommodation;
- [Willing Workers on Organic Farms](#) is a type of agritourism where people who have completed a Permaculture Design Course can stay on organic farms and work in exchange for food and accommodation. It has a strong presence in Australia and attract overseas visitors; and
- Tourism and Transport Australia's research paper and recommendations on nature tourism development are contained in its [Unlocking our Great Outdoors](#) report.

State

A number of organisations and policies operate at the state level to guide and support the development of agritourism:

- Others concerning the Digital Economy, International Education and Research; Manufacturing, Professional Services, Creative Industries and Mining.;
- [NSW Farmers](#) is a not-for-profit lobby group advocating for the farming industry;
- [Destination NSW](#) is the lead government agency for the NSW tourism and major events sector. It utilises tourism data entered into the [Australian Tourism Data Warehouse](#) for its website [Visit NSW](#) and promotes regional areas a destinations for tourists in NSW;
- The NSW Department of Primary Industries has created an online platform for visitors to book agricultural experiences directly with farmers. [Visit My Farm](#) underwent a two month trial in 2017 and lists farms in the Riverina region, including in the CGRC region;
- [Easy to do Business](#) is an initiative of Service NSW to streamline the approvals needed to start a business;
- NSW Government's [Regional Development Framework](#);
- The NSW Aboriginal Tourism Action Plan 2017 – 2020 builds on the 2013 – 2016 Action Plan; and
- The NSW Government has adopted a [Right to Farm Policy](#). The main intent of the policy relates to a desire by farmers to undertake lawful agricultural practices without conflict or interference arising from complaints from neighbours and other land users.

Regional

A number of organisations and policies operate at the regional level to guide and support the development of agritourism:

Organisations, plans and policies encompassing a number of Local Government Areas:

- [Destination Riverina Murray](#) is one of six destination networks established by the NSW Government and funded through [Destination NSW](#). The organisation created the [Riverina Murray Destination Management Plan 2018](#). The Plan has nine Strategic Development Themes, one of which is to develop food and agritourism in the region. The Plan identifies the development of additional farm stay eco-huts in Kimo Estate near Gundagai as a tier two major project for the Eastern Riverina region. More details about Kimo Estate can be found in [Appendix I](#);
- [Thrive Riverina](#) is the regional tourism organisation for the Riverina. Working in collaboration with Destination Riverina Murray, its purpose is to be a marketing collective for the visitor economy in the Riverina aimed at 'experience enthusiasts'. It runs the [Riverina Tourism](#) website. It's [Riverina Destination Management Plan 2013](#) identifies two priority projects:
 - The creation of regional tourism organisations for the Eastern, Southern and Western Riverina
 - The development of agritourism in the Riverina.

For the Eastern Riverina region the development of farm stay accommodation, farm tours and local produce stores is identified as a development opportunity. Thrive Riverina runs the annual [Taste Riverina Festival](#).

- The NSW Government is currently in the process of assisting local councils to develop 37 [Regional Economic Development Strategies](#) across regional NSW. The South West Slopes Regional Economic Development Strategy is currently being drafted and includes the CGRC area. The supporting analysis for the strategy identifies four regional specialisations for the area: agriculture, food processing, tourism and mining;
- The NSW Department of Planning & Environment's [Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2036](#) is a 20-year blueprint for the future of the Riverina Murray. The Plan is the implementation of the Federal Government's Murray-Darling Basin Plan. Direction 1 of the Plan is to protect the region's agricultural land and Direction 7 is to promote tourism. The Plan identifies four priorities that apply to the Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council area:
 - “• *Support agriculture as the dominant industry, encouraging development of large-scale livestock production and processing, as well as development of key freight transport services;*
 - *Develop niche value-added agricultural produce and related tourism opportunities;*

- *Capitalise on the existing access to rail and road infrastructure;*
- *Enhance access to services and facilities, including health and aged care, to support a healthy rural community.”*

- The [Riverina Eastern Regional Organisation of Councils](#) (REROC) is a voluntary association of nine local government councils and two water county councils located in the eastern Riverina region of NSW. The member councils are: Bland, Coolamon, Cootamundra-Gundagai, Greater Hume, Junee, Lockhart, Snowy Valleys, Temora, Wagga Wagga, Goldenfields Water and Riverina Water; and
- [Regional Development Australia-Riverina](#) (RDA-Riverina) is part of an Australian Government initiative based on building partnerships and ensuring that all governments and stakeholders are responsive to local priorities and needs. It is a conduit between government and local communities, and a provider of information. It is a non-profit, community-based organisation, with a committee of 12 members spanning 14 local government areas who represent local communities, businesses and local government. RDA-Riverina engaged consultants to write the Riverina Destination Management Plan 2013. It also runs a Facebook group for tourism operators in the Riverina area, called Riverina Tourism Industry Group.

Local

The key relevant organisations in the Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council area include the Council and the Cootamundra Development Corporation, a non-profit organisation representing businesses in Cootamundra.

The Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council Villages Strategy 2018 and the Community Strategic Plan 2018 – 2028 are relevant to the development of agritourism.

Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council Villages Strategy, 2018

The purpose of the Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council Villages Strategy 2018 is to provide clear, strategic indicators for the development of the villages of the area over the next 30 years and beyond. Sections of the Strategy relevant to agritourism are discussed below in relation to specific villages.

Coolac

The local community identified a desire for Coolac to be a small farms community, with opportunities for market gardens, speciality farms and small farms to be harmonised with a service industry element such as cafés, nurseries, permaculture schools and farm stays. Digital opportunities are also available with connection to the NBN, meaning that small holdings in Coolac could share their experiences and sell products online.

Relevant Villages Strategy actions for Coolac include:

- Action 3.8: Improved directional and promotional advertising signage to Coolac;
- Action 3.9: Support development which caters to the road transport and tourism industry; and
- Action 3.10: Rezone Coolac Village to be a mixture of RU5 – Village to support residential and commercial growth.

Nangus

The Villages Strategy suggests that the smaller, fragmented acreages surrounding Nangus could flourish if they are connected to the new reticulated water service. These acreages can play a role in the supply of land for marginal and boutique agricultural pursuits such as heritage animal breeding, market gardens and the like. These small farm enterprises are often the backbone to local markets and small grocers.

Relevant Villages Strategy actions for Nangus include:

- Action 3.24: Support development of small farm enterprises in identified areas surrounding Nangus; and
- Action 3.25: Rezone to expand the RU5 - Village zone and RU4 – Primary Production Small Lots as proposed, with all lots in the RU5 Zone to be connected to potable water.

Tumblong

Action 3.50 of the strategy recommends the rezoning of existing small holdings along Adelong Road (with 1.5km of Hume highway) to RU4 Primary Production Small Lots. At present the lots are zoned RU1. Rezoning these properties will allow the development of small, diversified farms such as orchards, pastured chickens, flowers, native plants etc. It will also allow lifestyle rural development. This kind of development creates opportunities for agritourism development.

Community Strategic Plan: Our Place, Our Future 2018-28

The Community Strategic Plan has four Key Directions, the second one relating to economic development. Section 2.3 under this Direction is to *“Develop and implement strategies which provide opportunities for increased tourism.”*

The Directive contains a list of “big ideas” for our area: one of these is to develop pop-up shops in vacant shops and another is to encourage local farmer’s markets. Community members are encouraged to shop locally to support local businesses.

5. Agricultural Tourism in CGRC

5.1 Background

The current status of agritourism in CGRC has a mixed history with various agritourism ventures across the area. Through interviews with farmers the following is a summary of which agritourism initiatives they conducted in the past and why they stopped.

Damasque Rose Oil Farm

Gundagai

The farm owner stopped offering tours because he didn't earn enough in on-farm sales to make them worth his time. He said that the cost of providing toilets, disabled toilets, seating and shelter was prohibitive. He stated that tours for international tourists were profitable because they bought more product than domestic tourists.

Claron Park Produce and OBryan's Natural Products

Cootamundra

The owner used to grow vegetables and native 'bush tucker' plants on her property in Cootamundra to be made into sauces and preserves. She held farmgate sales at the property. She also bought produce from local farmers and took it to the weekly Canberra Farmer's Market to sell. She stopped farming on the property after her farm was repeatedly exposed to pesticide overspray, killing her plants.

Yandilla Mustard Seed Oil

Yandilla, Olympic Highway, Wallendbeen

Tea rooms and farm tours used to operate on the property but have since ceased as the owners are semi-retired. The farm is still operating.

Darbalara Farm Pty Ltd Poultry Farmers & Dealers

Darbalara

The owner used to sell eggs and sheep at farmer's markets but found them too time consuming. He now sells eggs at Knight's Meats in Wagga Wagga and at Gundagai IGA.

Paterson's Gundagai Vineyard Cellar Door

Tumblong

The cellar door has now closed, and the owner sells most of his stock to China via online ordering as it is more profitable.

5.2 Current Scale and Value

The following are a summary of current agritourism related initiatives in the CGRC area:

AirBnB Farm Stays

- [Kimo Estate](#) is a luxury accommodation, wedding and reception venue in Nangus on a 7,000ac sheep and cattle farm. It offers onsite accommodation for up to 28 people in four buildings:
 - Windies cottage
 - Daleys cottage
 - An “eco hut”; and
 - A refurbished shearer’s quarters.

Accommodation costs between \$130 - \$350 per night for two people. It specialises in hosting weddings, using a historic homestead for the weddings and a large barn for receptions. They are a “superhost” on AirBnB with over 100 reviews. Kimo Estate is also hosting an agritourism event called “Popped Up At Kimo” on 22 November 2018 featuring market stalls and food.

- [Tarrabandra Fishing Retreat](#) is a 400ha livestock and crop farm south of Gundagai. Fishing is the main attraction for guests. Accommodation is provided in a four bedroom house;
- [Coolac Cabins and Farmstay](#) offers three cabins for hire on a 90ac beef cattle farm;
- [Carinyah Homestead](#) is a four bedroom farmhouse situated between Cootamundra and Muttama on a crop and livestock farm. It is listed on AirBnB as “Homestead der Farm Carinyah”;
- [Wallendbeen Park Farm](#) is a one bedroom cottage on a farm producing free range heritage pigs and Speckled Park beef cattle. A butcher from Sydney, “[1888 Certified](#)”, once bought a bus of foodie tourists to the farm for a tour;
- [The Rabbit's Hut, Coolac](#) is a two bedroom house on a cattle station bordered by the Murrumbidgee River; and
- [Hillview](#), just south of Gundagai along the Hume Highway, has been operating as a farm stay since 2006. It offers five cottages and one luxury “glamping” tent. It is not listed on AirBnB but has its own website. More details about Hillview farm stay is provided in [Appendix I](#).

Cafes and shops that sell local produce:

- [Corridor 37](#) cafe in Cootamundra buys produce from backyard growers and sells it in its store “Providore 37”. The store also sells locally made jams and sauces. It recently started stock bacon; and ham from Wallendbeen producer [Muddy Pigs Pastured Pork](#);
- [Planted Cootamundra](#) cafe buys local produce where possible for its kitchen. It also offers local sauces, cooking oils and jams for sale;
- Cootamundra SUPA IGA sells beef from Sunny Point farm in Oberon, locally produced olive oil and Harden Honey. The owners of the IGA own Sunny Point farm in Oberon and produce beef which is then sold in the store;
- Cootamundra Butchery sells locally grown meat, including a breed of lamb called Texel which is produced at the property Hillside in Cootamundra. It butchers beef from Oberon farm after they are slaughtered at Cowra Meat Processors. It also breaks down pig carcasses for [Muddy Pigs Pastured Pork](#) after they are slaughtered at Cowra Meat Processors; and
- Gundagai IGA sells Darbalara Eggs from Darbalara Farm near Gundagai.

Farms, industries and wineries that accept visitors or do tours:

- The owners of [Highfield Farm and Woodland](#) in Mt Adrah hosted a cooking class on their farm with chef Soon Lee Low from Food I Am cooking school in Wagga Wagga. Lamb from the farm was recently used in a local producer’s lunch at Brungle Hall organised by local food organisation [Taste of Tumut](#). It currently sells lamb, eggs and kombucha at farmer’s markets. It offers farm tours on the State Government funded website [Visit My Farm](#);
- [Muddy Pigs Pastured Pork](#) at Wallendbeen intends to offer tours in future; and
- [The Patch](#) farm in Cootamundra intends to offer farm tours and set up a farm shop selling seedlings. The owner currently sells eggs and seedlings at the Riverina Producer’s Market in Wagga Wagga, Murrumbateman Village Markets and Cootamundra Sunday Markets.

Cootamundra Girl Guide’s Sunday Market

The [markets](#) are held on the second Sunday of the month at Fisher Park on Bourke Street in Cootamundra from 9am – 1pm. The market held on 8 April 2018 featured two local producers:

- C&L Murphy from Tumut sold locally made jams, chutneys and baked goods; and
- Allan Apps from Young sold goat milk soap and local honey.

[Falling Leaf Fruit Shop](#) in Tumut sold fruit and vegetables of various origin, not specifically local.

The market held on 8 July 2018 featured a number of local producers:

- Cootamundra Girl Guides sold homemade scones and fudge;
- Made to Inspire Harden sold homemade soap and candles;
- A seller from Tumut sold plants;
- A seller from Tumut sold locally made jams, chutneys and baked goods;
- A seller from Young sold goat milk soap and local honey; and
- One stallholder sold fresh garlic.

Falling Leaf Fruit Shop in Tumut sold fruit and vegetables of various origin, not specifically local.

Sundy in Gundy Market

The [market](#) is held on the last Sunday of the month from 9am-12pm in Sheridan Street, Gundagai.

Gundagai Visitor Information Centre

The [Gundagai Visitor Information Centre](#) sells Gundagai Gold Honey and Alpine Honey. It also sells Riverina Grove products, a producer from Griffith NSW.

Make it Local

Make it Local is a quarterly shared dinner where attendees bring a plate of food sourced from a 100ml radius of Cootamundra. It is held at [The Arts Centre Cootamundra](#). The autumn 2018 event had 25 attendees and the winter 2018 event had 12 attendees.

Local Unlimited

Local Unlimited was a local food event held at The Arts Centre Cootamundra on 25 May 2018. It featured a presentation on the benefits of local food production by blogger Sophie Hansen and a tasting of local food from producers around Cootamundra. Over 100 people attended the event.

Train tours

Destination Riverina Murray NSW has organised a four day train journey from Sydney to Griffith, visiting farms and restaurants along the way. The [Taste Riverina Food and Wine Adventure](#) will pass by Cootamundra twice but not stop there.

6. Community Consultation on Agritourism

The initial community consultation for the Rural Lands Strategy consisted of a two hour workshop in Cootamundra, a two hour workshop in Gundagai and an online survey. Respondents to the online survey identified a number of agritourism opportunities for our region. There was a strong desire for the ability to buy and sell fresh local produce, specifically via farmer's markets. Fruit and vegetable stores, pop-up shops, farm gate sales and fruit and veg deliveries were also suggested.

The respondents strongly supported the creation of smaller rural lots either for small-scale agriculture or hobby farms. They wanted council to create smaller lots and support the development of boutique farming such as flowers, fruit, native plants, cheese, wine, berries etc. These farms can then be used for agritourism enterprises such as farm tours, farm stays, farmgate sales and wine tastings. A summary of the online survey results is provided in Table 3.

Table 3: Online Survey Results

Opportunity	Number of respondents suggesting it
Ability to buy/sell fresh produce so local community can buy it	9
Farmers markets	8
Farm diversification/boutique farming/small farmers (cheese, wine, native plants, flowers, fruit, berries etc)	8
Allow smaller lot sizes for hobby farm/small scale alternative farms to encourage boutique farms and agritourism/farm tours	7
Farm stays	5
Support for value adding. Packaging, sales and marketing, so producers can get their produce to best markets together	4
Farm tours	3
Organic farming	3
Farmgate sales	2
Better support for small scale farmers	2
Community garden	2
Promote our beef and lamb in cities, paddock to plate	2
Connect restaurants to producers to buy direct from the farm	2
Fruit and vegetable deliveries	1
Viticulture	1
Wine tastings	1

Rose farm in Gundagai should open	1
“Hands on” farm animal experiences	1
Children’s camps on farms	1
Wine festival with grape stomping	1
Greater promotion of our rural shows	1
Pop up shops or permanent shop that stocks local meat/fruit/vegetable/grains/bread	1
Farm trail	1
Support development of wedding venues, accommodation, function centres	1
Small scale abattoir	1
Aggregation sites for niche varieties	1
Reduce heavy regulation and fees	1
Support refugees to start up market gardens, rent them land with an option to buy once established	1
Supported camping holidays	1
Hemp farming	1
Products made from local fibres	1

The two workshops identified issues and opportunities for the development of the rural areas of the LGA. The suggestions relating to agritourism mirrored those in the online survey:

- Food co-op or local food selling point;
- Farmer’s markets;
- Farm diversification;
- Smaller farm holdings;
- Farm stays;
- Value-adding of local produce;
- Organic farming;
- Farm gate sales; and
- Development of a multi-species abattoir.

Other suggestions included:

- Regional food trails;
- Market gardens;
- Improved tourism services;
- Make the region motorbike friendly;
- Capture RV market;
- Farm experience events for school children from Sydney; and
- Ensure disability access.

An informal consultation was conducted at [The Arts Centre Cootamundra](#) on 25 May 2018 as part of their local food event “Local Unlimited” featuring food from local producers and a talk by local food advocate Sophie Hansen.

Space was made available for respondents to write down ideas for the future of our farming regions. Only one suggestion was made that was relevant to this paper, which is the development of a mixed-species, small scale abattoir.

The consultations found strong support for the development of hobby farms.

In conversation with a council officer, one farmer suggested that hobby farm subdivisions should only be “on the worst land” to ensure that productive agricultural land is not fragmented.

7. Opportunities

Research and discussion with farmers found there are few agritourism businesses in the CGRC area.

For this reason, initiatives aimed at increasing agritourism in the region should focus on:

- Promotion, support and business development for existing agritourism businesses;
- Support and assistance for farmers to start agritourism businesses;
- Providing appropriate land use zoning, infrastructure and transport links to support the development of agritourism; and
- Attracting more tourists to make agritourism a more profitable and sustainable enterprise.

7.1 Location and Accessibility

The CGRC area is well placed to attract tourists from the Olympic Highway, Hume Highway and Burley Griffin Way. Potential exists for agritourism operators to encourage people to stop in the region for a day or weekend on their way elsewhere, or as a destination in its own right.

Tourism promotion should also aim to capture the day trip and weekend holiday market from both Canberra and Wagga Wagga, as both cities are well within a two hour driving distance from the region.

The large tourist markets of Sydney and Melbourne are around a 4 – 5 hour driving distance from the LGA, so promotion in these areas might focus on longer-stay tourists such as ‘Grey Nomads’ and backpackers travelling around Australia.

Educational experiences such as short courses in farming or cooking can also attract long-stay travellers to the region. It is not out of the question that visitors from these centres would not choose the regional as a weekend destination.

7.2 Natural Resources and Landscape

The CGRC area has a range of natural resources and sufficient agricultural production to potentially brand the CG region as a local food destination similar to Orange or the Hunter Valley in NSW. A case study for the city of Orange is included as [Appendix II](#).

The land around Stockinbingal and Wallendbeen has some of the best wheat growing land in the country, with a crop sown every year. The region also produces high-quality lamb which could be marketed to gourmet butchers for people who want a “paddock to plate” experience. [Mirrool Creek Lamb](#) buys lamb from around the Riverina, including the CG region, brands it, and sells it to specialty stores in Sydney.

Cootamundra's previous tourism marketing has focused on the bright yellow flowers of the Cootamundra Wattle (*Acacia Baileyana*).

No tourist drives or 'taste trails' have been developed across the CGRC area. However, there is potential to create a tourist drive that visits the area's best viewpoints as well as encouraging visits to farm gate sales or wineries in the local area and region.

7.3 Community Support for Agritourism

Representatives from the following local businesses contributed to the preparation of this Issues Paper and support the further development of agritourism opportunities in the CGRC area and the region:

- [Muddy Pigs Pastured Pork](#), Wallendbeen;
- [Highfield Farm and Woodland](#), Mt Adrah;
- [Kimo Estate](#), Nangus;
- [Wallendbeen Park Farm](#) farm stay in Wallendbeen;
- [Mid-Murrumbidgee North Landcare](#);
- Elm & Wren Guesthouse and [Corridor 37](#) cafe, Cootamundra;
- [Planted Cootamundra](#) café;
- Cootamundra Butchery;
- Cootamundra SUPA IGA;
- Gundagai IGA Plus Liquor;
- [The Patch](#) farm, Cootamundra;
- [Buronga Organics](#), Frampton;
- [The Arts Centre Cootamundra](#);
- Wobbler Downs Extra Virgin Olive Oil, Cootamundra;
- Darbalara Farm, Darbalara;
- Pride of Pennington products, Cootamundra;
- Conqueror Milling, Cootamundra;
- Onslow Angus, Cootamundra;

- Bogongo Angus, Coolac;
- [Dusty Road Coffee Roasters](#), Cootamundra;
- Cootamundra Wattlebirds; and
- Landgrove Cootamundra.

There are also two committees working with Council to develop tourism in the area – the Gundagai Tourism Action Committee and the Cootamundra Tourism Action Group. Both groups are made up of community members and work with Council staff to implement tourism promotion projects in the region.

Better networking between these parties in the form of a working group or local food mailing list could increase the ability of these stakeholders to work together on agritourism projects. It will also allow local businesses to refer tourists to other businesses and events in the region, increasing tourist stay and spend in the area. Thompson’s (2015) research into the Barossa Valley in South Australia found that personal referrals was an important part of tourism promotion in an area.

7.4 Increasing the Range of Accommodation Options

A larger share of the tourist market can be captured by increasing the range of accommodation options, from free camping to luxury hotels.

[Thrive Riverina’s Riverina Destination Management Plan 2013](#) identifies the lack of diversity in accommodation as an issue in the Riverina region generally, with the majority being 3 – 3½ star motels.

It recommends the development of boutique and/or unique accommodation options in the region.

One of the themes of [Destination Riverina Murray’s Riverina Murray Destination Management Plan 2018](#) is the development of a more diverse accommodation supply in the Riverina region. The Plan suggests the development of more:

- Backpacker accommodation;
- 4 – 5 star hotels;
- Serviced apartments;
- Boutique accommodation;

- Glamping;
- AirBnB rentals; and
- Eco-accommodation.

Specifically identified is the opportunity to develop eco-accommodation next to rivers and natural settings.

In terms of attracting tourists, free camping sites spaces in the CGRC area could be better documented on WikiCamps and Google Maps with photos and information on facilities.

Upgrades to facilities may attract more tourists as well – this is likely to be identified in the CGRC Tourism and Economic Development Strategy, due to be published in 2019.

The CGRC Villages Strategy lists the upgrading of the Stockinbingal free camping facilities in the schedule of works, although no funding has been allocated for this project at this time.

There is also scope to offer more farm experiences as part of farm stay accommodation, such as cooking classes. Examples of successful enterprises in this area include:

- [Broughton Mill Farm](#) in Berry NSW offers cooking classes and farm stay accommodation; and
- [Buena Vista Farm](#) in Gerringong NSW offers a range of cooking classes on the farm.

[Sticky Rice Cooking School](#) in Stirling near Adelaide, South Australia is not on a farm, however it is a good case study of a cooking school and accommodation business.

As discussed previously the CGRC area has seven farm stays that can accommodate a total of 82 people.

Non-farm stay accommodation is also available in the CGRC area. The following is a summary of non-farm stay accommodation options.

Hotels

- Cootamundra township has seven Hotels with prices ranging from \$100 – \$150 per night, plus a caravan park;
- Gundagai has 14 Hotels with prices ranging from \$85 – \$160 per night, and three caravan parks: and
- Other hotels in the CGRC area are located at Coolac and Wallendbeen.

Luxury Accommodation

A search of Booking.com shows one 4-star hotel in the CGRC area – Poet’s Recall Motel in Gundagai. Kimo Estate also offers high-end farm stay accommodation.

Free Camping

Free and legal camping in the CGRC area is available at:

- Wallendbeen Rest Area;
- Stockinbingal Rest Area;
- Cootamundra Showground, 45 – 47 Pinkerton Road, Cootamundra;
- Cunjigong Creek Rest Area in Frampton, 11km south-west of Cootamundra on the Olympic Highway;
- Morley’s Creek, for self-contained vehicles for up to 48 hours only. Located on the corner on Middleton Drive and Oibell Drive, Gundagai;
- Pumphouse Reserve, for self-contained vehicles for up to 72 hours only. Located on Pope Street Gundagai; and
- Free camping is available behind the Beehive Hotel at Coolac.

Camping is available at Cootamundra Showground for a fee.

A number of free campgrounds exist near the CGRC area:

- Bethungra Dam;
- Bethungra campground, Baylis St, Bethungra;
- Jugiong Showground, Old Hume Highway, Jugiong;
- Wagnabah Oval, Wombat;
- Kingsvale Rest Area, near Wombat;
- Springdale Memorial Park; and
- Brunle Bridge.

Motor home dump points exist at Apex Park in Cootamundra and on Railway Parade near the railway station in Gundagai.

Backpacker Accommodation

There is no backpacker accommodation available in the CGRC area. Provision of backpacker accommodation in the area could attract more tourists, as research by *Tourism Research Australia (2018b)* found that 7,000 backpackers visited the Riverina region in 2017. Backpackers are classed as visitors who spent at least one night of their holiday in backpacker accommodation.

Artist in Residence Space

The Arts Centre Cootamundra offers free accommodation inside the Centre for Artists in Residence. They have one room available and aim for artists to stay for approximately one month.

7.5 An Inviting Region for Business

Supporting agritourism development in the region entails supporting business development generally. The main advantages for agritourism operators in the CGRC area are high quality agricultural land, low land prices for commercial and industrial development, and a central location along main state and national transport routes. The CGRC area has low land prices compared to other regional areas, particularly larger metro areas, in NSW. This can be capitalised on by reviewing land use zoning and approvals processes to make it more attractive for people to invest in the region.

Professional development and business advice is available to current and future agritourism operators through a variety of channels:

- Council provides free business support from its two Economic Development and Tourism Officers. Officers are available to assist one-on one, and also organise business development events;
- [BEC Business Advice South & West NSW](#) in Wagga Wagga offers free business advice and grant writing assistance;
- The [Cootamundra Development Corporation](#) organises professional development workshops for members;
- The [NSW Business Chamber](#) offers free services to members of the Cootamundra Development Corporation. It offers a free business advice hotline, business directory and a legal toolkit. It also hosts business development events. It also offers free phone consultations with lawyers, marketing specialists and industrial relations specialists;
- NSW TAFE offer free courses for small businesses under its [Skills for Business Program](#);
- Destination NSW offers free and discounted workshops in the Riverina region for tourism businesses under its [NSW First Program](#). It also offers free webinars; and
- Service NSW's [Easy to do Business](#) offers free personalised support, how-to guides and online tools to streamline the process of applying for approvals to operate a cafe, small bar or restaurant.

Council also promotes local businesses by operating two Facebook pages, [Coota Local](#) and [Gundagai Local](#). Businesses can share posts from their Facebook pages to the page. At the time of writing Coota Local has 337 likes and Gundagai Local has 452 likes.

At present there are a number of free business directories available to local operators:

- [Visit NSW](#) – entries are managed by Council’s Economic Development and Tourism Officers, and the Gundagai Visitor Information Centre Staff;
- [Gundagai Local, Coota Local](#) managed by Council staff;
- Cootamundra CanAssist Cancer Assistance Network Business Services Directory, a locally-produced printed directory;
- The Cootamundra Development Corporation’s [member directory](#);
- NSW Chamber of Business [Member Business Directory](#), free for members of the Cootamundra Development Corporation;
- Free online job directory [Jobs Riverina](#), funded and managed by the Riverina NSW branch of Regional Development Australia
- [Creative Riverina](#), an arts business directory managed by Eastern Riverina Arts;
- [Thrive Riverina](#) business listings;
- [Taste Riverina](#), run by Thrive Riverina, lists tours, attractions and accommodation; and
- [Taste Trails](#) is a national website of producer listings and producer maps.

The [UnWINEd Riverina](#) website is a business listing for members of the Riverina Winemaker’s Association. It lists events and the location of cellar doors.

7.6 Diversity of Tourism Products

The success of agritourism initiatives depends on the overall tourist draw to a region. Existing tourism attractions, events, accommodation and restaurants could be better promoted by regular updating of the listings on www.visitnsw.com. A Cootamundra tourist website is currently under construction and will make it easier for tourists to learn about the town and what they can do there.

The region is home to a number of outdoor activities that could be part of a targeted marketing campaign to position the area as an ‘adventure and health’ region featuring fresh locally produced food and outdoor sports.

Promotion of nature-based tourism in the CG region ties in with the aims of [Thrive Riverina's Riverina Destination Management Plan 2013](#). The Plan identifies the development of nature-based tourism as a priority development opportunity for the Eastern Riverina region in four locations which are outside the CGRC area. [Destination Riverina Murray's Riverina Murray Destination Management Plan 2018](#) also supports the development of nature-based tourism. One of the Plan's nine major themes is to develop nature-based tourism.

7.7 No Local Abattoir

Small scale farming in our region would be assisted by the provision of a local abattoir for sheep, goats and poultry. At present:

- Cattle of any number can be slaughtered at Hilltop Meats in Young;
- Gundagai Meat Processors only slaughter lambs and any amount over 10 lambs is sold to Coles. It offers a service to small producers where every Monday they slaughter up to 10 lambs from a single producer and sends the meat to Smart Butchery; and
- Juneee Abattoir only slaughters lambs between 22kg – 28kg, with a minimum number of 50 lambs.

Animals that cannot be serviced by these three abattoirs must be sent to Cowra Meat Processors to be slaughtered.

Community consultation for the Rural Lands Strategy found support for the development of a small-scale, mixed-species abattoir in the Cootamundra-Gundagai area. At present a large-scale abattoir sits unused in Cootamundra. It closed in 2017.

7.8 No Local Produce Store in Cootamundra or Gundagai

At present there is no local greengrocer in the CGRC area. Cootamundra and Gundagai each have a Woolworths and IGA store.

Community consultation found strong support for buying fresh produce either via a fruit and vegetable shop or a farmer's market.

Research could be conducted into the financial viability of a fresh produce store in Cootamundra, Gundagai or both. Alternatively, the IGA supermarkets could better brand their local produce so the public knows it can buy locally produced food there.

7.9 Development of Markets in Cootamundra and Gundagai

The [Cootamundra Sunday Markets](#) operate on the second Sunday of the month from 8:30am – 1pm in Fisher Park, Cootamundra. The [Sundy in Gundy Markets](#) are held on the last Sunday of the month from 9am – 12pm in Sheridan Street, Gundagai. These markets allow local producers to sell direct to the public, and better patronage would increase the profits for sellers. Markets also attract tourists and brand the region as a local food destination. Community consultation found a strong desire to purchase local food, either at a farmer's market or a fruit and vegetable shop.

A Council officer attended the [Riverside Markets](#) in Jugiong on 14 April 2018 and asked stallholders why they don't attend the Cootamundra Sunday Markets or Gundagai markets and what would attract them to these markets. Stallholders said the attendance is currently too low for it to be financially feasible, and they would come if more people attended the markets. The Riverside Markets attracted stallholders from Binalong, Young and Tumut.

Attendance at the Cootamundra and Gundagai markets might be improved by implementing the following changes:

- Holding the markets undercover in a hall during winter. The Cootamundra Town Hall has a commercial kitchen which would allow one or more stallholders to serve hot food. The weekly Riverside Markets in Wagga are held in a hall;
- Holding the markets in a unique location during warmer weather. The owner of [Corridor 37 Cafe](#) in Cootamundra has suggested her property as a location for a future farmer's market;
- Better promotion of the markets via the Council newsletter, Coota Local Facebook page, radio and fliers/posters;
- Arranging with Hilltops, Junee Shire, Temora Shire and Snowy Valleys Councils to cross-promote markets in each region using their newsletters and websites.
- Holding the markets during another event. This happened on 10 June 2018 when the Cootamundra market was held at Cootamundra Showgrounds at the same time as a horse show; and
- Including attractions such as face painting or cooking classes to attract attendees.

The organiser of Cootamundra Sunday Markets said their ability to advertise the markets is limited because their profits are low. They currently advertise in the Cootamundra Herald at a cost of \$70. They also pay \$70 to hire Fisher Park for each market. Council support with advertising might help to promote the markets. Relocating the markets may encourage higher patronage, however access to amenities such as toilets, shelter, playgrounds, provision for dogs and adequate parking must be considered. Keeping the markets close to the main streets in Cootamundra and Gundagai is key, as

people are unlikely to go far out of their way to attend the markets but would integrate them into their shopping trip to the main street businesses.

In terms of tourist appeal, research by *Kantar TNS (2014)* shows that travellers desire the experience of markets for shopping but attend shopping centres because they are cheaper and have a larger variety of shops and restaurants. They seek out unique experiences, such as an interesting location, authentic food or local designs. Ideas for future improvement of the Cootamundra and Gundagai markets can be gained from looking at larger, more tourist-focused markets like the [River and Wren Boutique Markets](#) in Wagga Wagga.

7.10 Support for Farmers to Develop Agritourism Enterprises

Council can act as a facilitator to connect farmers to sources of business advice, funding and events. Development of a local business newsletter would allow Council to send out information about grant opportunities, workshops and networking events. This can be done using a mailing list and the business email lists used by Council's economic development officers.

There are a number of websites where agritourism operators can promote their businesses: AirBnB, Booking.com, Stayz.com, Visit NSW, Google Reviews, Tripadvisor and Visit My Farm. Council could either email this information to businesses or organise workshops on online promotion.

A guide to setting up farm stays, farm tours and farmgate sales could be sourced and disseminated to farmers. It would contain information on business planning, public liability insurance, marketing, planning approvals, environmental health laws, best practice examples and other practical information. Dairy Australia's [The People in Dairy](#) website is a useful template for the development of this guide. The NSW Government offers free advice on the approvals needed to open a new business. Information on how to contact this service, [Easy to do Business](#), should be included in the guide.

7.11 On-Farming Learning Experiences

Agricultural education experiences are a way to attract people to the region for an extended stay. They can be targeted at the complete novice, such as farm internships or cooking courses, or at university students, farmers or researchers.

Farm internships are another form of agritourism yet to be established in the region. Information on how to attract, house and manage interns could be disseminated to farmers to help them develop internship programs. [Old Mill Road](#) in Moruya, NSW and [Caroola Farm](#) in Mulloon, NSW can be used as case studies.

Landcare Cootamundra has hosted native bushland regeneration events where people travel from Sydney, stay a week, plant trees and undertake Landcare projects.

[Hay Inc](#) is a volunteer committee that offers short courses in stockmanship for both sheep and cattle, and farming skills. This program should be investigated to see if something similar can be implemented in the CGRC area.

There may be opportunities to work with universities and TAFE to offer short courses in agriculture permaculture, agritourism and small business.

7.12 Domestic Visitor Market

Tourism promotion is well developed in Gundagai with a Visitor Information Centre, tourist website and strong social media presence.

Cootamundra tourism promotion is lacking. Better promotion of the town and its attractions would bring more tourists for the region and make existing and future agritourism enterprises more profitable. This is already underway with the appointment of an Economic Development and Tourism Officer to Council's Cootamundra office and the development of a Cootamundra tourism website. Future tourism development across the entire council region will be guided by the development of a Tourism and Economic Development Strategy, which will be published in 2019.

45% of domestic overnight visitors to the Riverina stay with friends and relatives so thought should be given to developing tourist attractions people can take their friends and family to on a day trip (*Tourism Research Australia, 2018a*). A successful regional example is the [Junee Liquorice and Chocolate Factory](#).

At present only 4.2% of domestic daytrips to regional NSW are to the Riverina region.

Most domestic overnight travellers were alone (31%), followed by adult couples (29%) so thought must be given to creating agritourism experiences that will appeal to them. Domestic daytrips to regional NSW as a whole are on the rise, increasing 16% between 2013 and 2017 (*Tourism Research Australia, 2018a*).

More tourists could be brought to the region by the development of agritourism package tours like the [Orange Vino Express](#) and [2018 Taste Riverina Heritage Train Journey](#). Research by Tourism Research Australia (2012) found that nine per cent of domestic tourists flying in to Sydney and staying in the metro area would be very likely to consider visiting other areas of NSW if there were more travel packages available.

There is an opportunity to work with Wagga Wagga City Council and other surrounding councils to develop a fly-in/out weekend agritourism package from Sydney and Melbourne to Wagga Wagga.

Tourism Research Australia (2012) recommended the development of travel packages in the [discussion of results of its Destination Visitor Survey on dispersal from Sydney to NSW](#).

7.13 International Visitor Market

Tourism Research Australia's (2012) research into regional NSW tourism markets recommended that travel packages be developed to increase visitor dispersal from Sydney to regional NSW.

One novel idea they had was to work with universities to develop travel packages for Chinese students and their visiting friends and relatives. These packages would be targeted to graduating students who often have friends and relatives visiting them.

Research by *Kantar TNS (2017)* on the international tourist market recommended having a greater presence on international social media and apps such as WeChat, Weibo, and C-trip to encourage Chinese people to visit Australia.

Support should be given to help businesses market themselves on these websites. A good case study is the recent influx of Chinese tourists to Sea Lake in Victoria, driven by posts on Chinese tourist websites.

No data could be found on the preferences of international visitors in relation to agritourism.

More focused research on this topic would enable Council to better market the local agritourism businesses to international visitors. Research on the international visitor market will be conducted as part of Council's Tourism and Economic Development Strategy.

7.14 Development of a Producer List

A list of local producers that allow farm tours could be distributed to tourists and tour operators.

7.15 Local Planning

Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council currently has two Local Environmental Plans (LEPs), one for Cootamundra and one for Gundagai. A new LEP for the amalgamated Cootamundra-Gundagai Council Area will commence in 2019.

The new Local Environmental Plan should ensure adequate provision of Light Industrial, Commercial and Primary Production Small Lots to ensure new farms and agritourism enterprises can conduct business in the area. Future land requirements will be researched during the development of Council's Tourism and Economic Development Strategy.

The existing Local Environmental Plans contain provisions that make it difficult for agritourism businesses to start or expand operations. The following would support agritourism development in the LGA:

- Zone objectives that promote local and regional agritourism;
- Use of an open zone approach to land use tables; and
- Implementing the actions under Council's Villages Strategy 2018.

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Appendix I – Local Case Studies

The following case studies provide examples of agritourism within the LGA

Kimo Estate

Historic, 7,000 acre Kimo Estate is located between Gundagai and Nangus on the picturesque banks of the Murrumbidgee River. Returning home five years ago David and Emelia Ferguson wanted to make their own mark on the property by utilising Emelia's skills to diversify the farm through events and agritourism. The added benefit of this is that it provides another source of income when weather and market conditions put pressure on the traditional farm enterprise.

Currently, Kimo Estate hosts wedding ceremonies in the historic gardens and utilises a repurposed grain shed as a reception venue. Accommodation is offered with a purpose built ecohut and two repurposed cottages. Since inception, their wedding business has gone from strength to strength and their accommodation offerings have capacity to grow further with future plans for more ecohuts to take in the Murrumbidgee River and surrounding hillscape.

The possibilities are endless for David and Emelia as they aim to create a brand and experience for guests as renowned as Soho Farm in Oxfordshire or Gleneagles in Scotland.



Stockinpiggle Free Range Pastured Port

Jason and Samantha purchased 80 acres outside Stockinbingal in 2017 with Jason having worked in agriculture for a number of years. Wanting to strike out on their own to pursue their passion for breeding heritage pigs and preparing gourmet pork products they established their free range Stockinbingal set up with their first batch of cute piglets quickly becoming the talk of the village.

Utilising a rotational paddock system, managed with electric fencing and hay shelters, Jason and Samantha's piglets roam the property freely. Their keen interest in permaculture has set them the goal of having a sustainable farm which they can gain some income from whilst still being able to experiment with making their own small goods, such as bacon, pancetta and salami. Over time they will add heritage pig breeds such as Berkshire or Hampshire to their farm, with the possibility of even adding some chickens and ducks.



Buronga Organics

David and Mary Booth own and operate Buronga Organics on 4,000 acres, just ten minutes outside of Cootamundra. Their farm management philosophy of working in harmony with nature sees them operate the farm in a sustainable manner, marrying the needs of their animals with the health of their soils and vegetation.

Buronga grows spelt and other grains and sells certified organic beef, lamb and goat meat. It's their promotion of goat meat with recipes and informative marking which garners the most attention. Aside from gaining an income from their meat, Buronga's Boer goats help manage the pasture and are great at weeding. Boer goats are particularly hardy and the perfect choice for land management. Utilising livestock to help maintain property is particularly relevant to smaller land holders close to town who are the front line of urban weeds and plants.



Hillview Farm Stay

Hillview, just south of Gundagai along the Hume Highway, has been operating as a farm stay since 2006. When new owners Ruth and Pierre took over at the end of 2017, they decided to expand upon the success of the Hillview Farm stay by creating a glamping experience. The concept of “glamping” invokes the romanticism of safari tents, but with all the mod cons of luxury accommodation. Glamping and primitive campgrounds have become increasingly popular as an alternate tourist and accommodation experience, particularly by families with children and pets.

Ruth and Pierre have big plans for Hillview and believe that their property and the links to the region through food, wine and other site seeing opportunities will see an increase in travellers seeking an experience rather than a stopover. They have leveraged off changing market demands by providing a Tesla recharge point for electric cars and by offering a number of recreational opportunities for guests from tennis and swimming to feeding animals and general nature watching.



Cootamundra Oilseeds

Cootamundra Oil Seeds is capitalising on a growing domestic and international market by certifying their products as Kosher, Halal and Organic. Certifying does often involve fees and could mean that certain preparation methods may need to be modified, so the cost of implementation versus the increased customer base is something which needs to be considered on an individual business basis. Certification labels allow consumers to quickly assess whether a particular product is acceptable for consumption in accordance with their ethical, religious or dietary standards. For Cootamundra Oil Seeds, certification has ensured them a wider customer base which in turn has helped to mitigate market turbulence.



Appendix II – Case Study of Orange, NSW

The following case study is an excerpt from *Ecker et al 2010* paper *Drivers of Regional Tourism and Agritourism in Australia*.