

COOTAMUNDRA-GUNDAGAI AGRITOURISM DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2021-2023

Developed by Tilma Group
for Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council
November 2020



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Cootamundra-Gundagai Agritourism Development Plan presents a pathway to the development of agritourism in the Cootamundra-Gundagai Shire.

This plan follows from Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council's (Council/CGRC) 2018 Rural Land Issues Paper: Agricultural Tourism. With bushfire relief funding Council contracted regional tourism consultancy Tilma Group to develop an agritourism development plan for the region. Council is keen to support, foster and enable agritourism, and be known to be 'open for business' for agritourism development.

Cootamundra and Gundagai regions recently merged into the Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council local government area. The two regions independently are quite distinct in terms of agriculture produced (more cropping in the north and more grazing in the south), highways and travel routes and landscape however when merged into one they offer an exciting opportunity for the development of a year round agritourism destination.

THE VISION

Cootamundra-Gundagai region is known for being supportive of developing new agritourism businesses, and has a sufficient concentration of agritourism experiences to support increased agritourism visitation.

THE STRATEGIC AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PLAN ARE TO:

The overarching aims of developing agritourism in Cootamundra-Gundagai are to support increased

- numbers of visitors to the region
- visitor length of stay
- visitor expenditure, especially on local products and services
- visitor satisfaction so visitors return and/or tell others.

Because there are few agritourism businesses in the region, according to the CGRC Agricultural Tourism Issues Paper, initiatives aimed at increasing agritourism

in the region and achieving the strategic aims 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 and streamlined planning processes to support the development of agritourism
- attracting more tourists to make agritourism a more profitable and sustainable enterprise.

A targeted and focused approach is necessary to achieve outcomes from agritourism.

1

PHASE 1: ESTABLISH FOUNDATIONS (2021-2022)

Build awareness and appeal of the region's existing agritourism product through marketing and experience development

Improve Council's planning process and LEP to be more supportive of developing new agritourism businesses

Work with partners to develop and implement an agritourism business development program that supports producers to develop their agritourism offerings

2

PHASE 2: ONGOING DEVELOPMENT (2023 ONWARDS)

Proactively attract investment into agritourism and support new product development

FACTORS CRITICAL TO SUCCESS IN ACTIVATION OF THESE PROJECTS, AND ACHIEVEMENT OF THE VISION INCLUDE:

- collaboration across the region
- supportive and enabling council outlook
- adequate resourcing
- encouraging planning department with a concierge approach to support a streamlined compliance process
- farmers and producers having necessary skills in tourism
- effective biosecurity management

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1. THE RATIONALE FOR THE STRATEGY

In the development of Council's 2018 Rural Land Issues Paper: Agricultural Tourism, research and discussion with farmers found there are few agritourism businesses in the Cootamundra-Gundagai region. For this reason, Council determined 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
- attracting more tourists to make agritourism a more profitable and sustainable enterprise.

This agritourism development plans outlines a clear pathway for Council to achieve these aims.

1.1 THE VALUE OF AGRITOURISM TO RURAL ECONOMIES

Tourism is one of Australia's "super-growth" sectors according to Deloitte.¹

"As agritourism spans a variety of sectors (agriculture, wholesale trade, retail trade, accommodation and food services and recreation) it is difficult to get a precise number of its contribution to the Australian economy.

Looking at total trip expenditure for visitors that went to farms and wineries (for the whole of 2015-16) and breweries/distilleries, farm-gates or food markets (from January to June 2016) we begin to get an idea of the sector's contribution to the economy – both directly (expenditure on these activities) and indirectly (expenditure on other trip activities such as accommodation and transport).

In 2015-16, visitors who participated in agritourism activities spent \$9.4 billion on their total 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.

For some regional economies, the expenditure by agritourists can be a major driver of economic activity. In some regions, the economic value of agritourism is likely to be bigger than the value of the primary produce. And if visitation growth continues to increase like it has over the past five years, agritourism could become an important sector in its own right.

Food tourism also provides a draw card from which other regional tourism businesses and experiences can benefit. While a precise value contribution to the economy is not easily derived – one thing is for certain, it is significant, particularly when considering the indirect and flow on benefits that agritourism provides."²

¹ Positioning for prosperity? Catching the next wave

² www2.deloitte.com/au/en/pages/consumer-industrial-products/articles/agritourism.html

The following comparison by the US Chamber of Commerce shows the benefit of tourism development over manufacturing development:

Annual economic impact of 100 new manufacturing jobs	Annual economic impact of 100 additional visitors a day
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Population increase of 360• 100 new households• US\$410,000 increase in personal income• US\$300,000 increase in bank deposits• US\$331,000 retail sales• 3 more retail outlets• 65 new industry related jobs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Population increase of 459• 140 new households• US\$777,777 increase in personal income• US\$144,000 increase in bank deposits• US\$1,129,000 retail sales• 7 more retail outlets• 111 new industry related jobs

Additionally, agritourism provides valuable benefits to producers, such as

- Diverse and increased income streams, including reduced seasonality of cash flow
- Development of new markets for farm produce
- Providing additional employment to support adult children and farmers’ spouses to remain on the farm
- Social contact for isolated families.



2. OUR PROJECT APPROACH

Over the project period the following methodologies were utilised:



REVIEW

An audit of existing and pipeline and potential agritourism product and experiences in the Cootamundra-Gundagai region was developed. Although the audit's development was hindered by a lack of accessible information, it provided a snapshot of the region's existing product and product gaps for analysis. Desktop review of relevant strategic and business plans from Council and other sources, and visitor statistics.³



ENGAGE

Consultation consisted of meetings and workshops with a broad range of agritourism stakeholders.⁴



DISTILLATION OF FINDINGS

An initial Gaps and Opportunities Paper was developed based on analysis of the desktop research and stakeholder input, and shared with the Project Steering Group for feedback.



INTEGRATION OF FEEDBACK

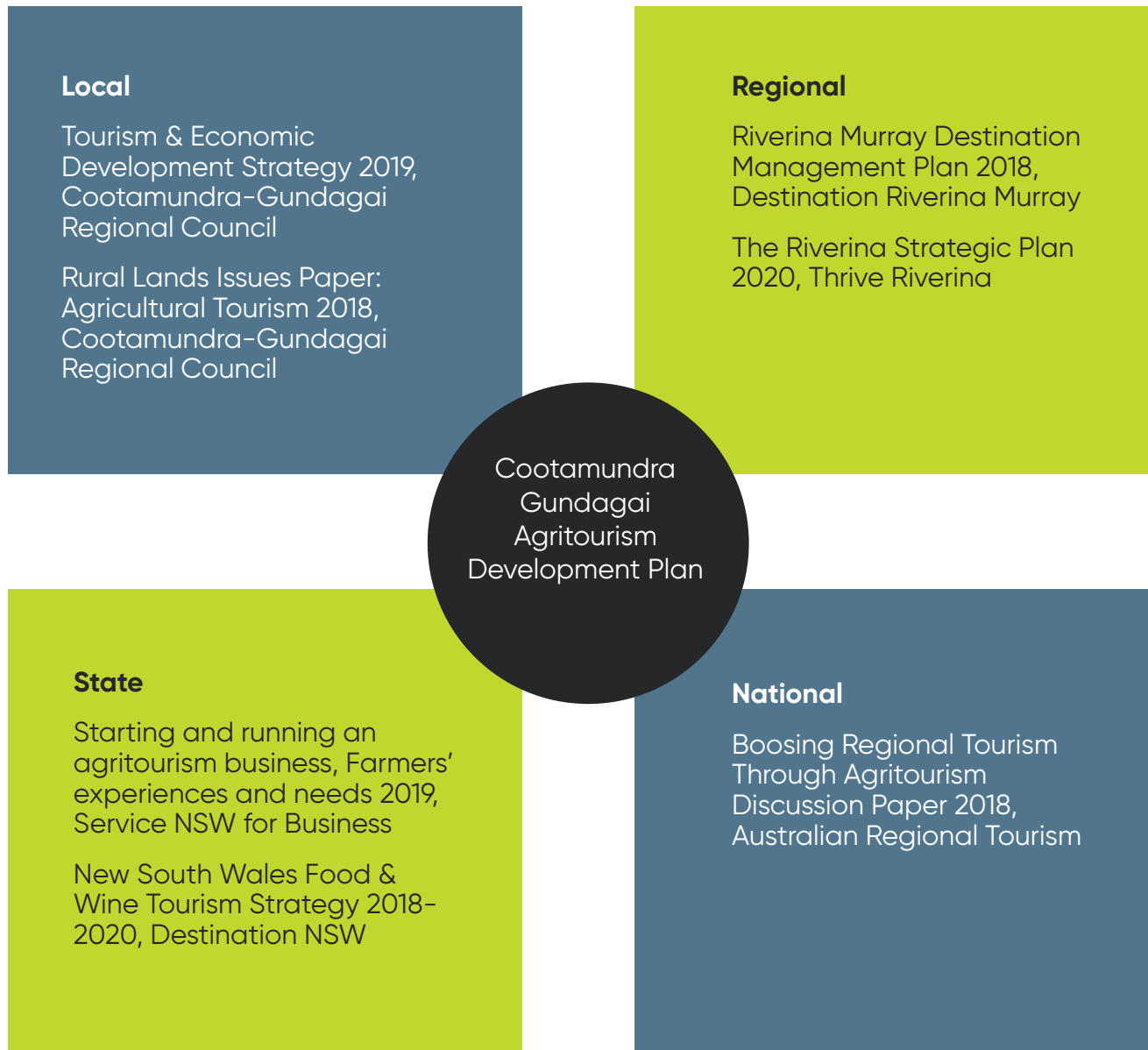
Distillation of feedback and development of draft Agritourism Development Plan.

DELIVERY OF FINAL PLAN



3. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

In developing the Cootamundra–Gundagai Agritourism Development Plan a number of relevant strategic documents have been reviewed for alignment.



4. MACRO INDUSTRY TRENDS

Desired attributes of a food and wine region

- Being able to eat fresh, locally grown⁵ food for breakfast, lunch and dinner is the number one desired attribute.
- Having the ability to buy local produce and to take short drives to places of interest nearby to the main destination being visited are important for a 'good' food and wine experience.
- Apart from distance from home, the top three factors influencing destination choice are the quality of customer service, the range of accommodation options, and the ease of organising the food and wine trip. Quality customer service refers also to destinations and attractions working together to provide food and wine visitors with a complete experience.
- Other key attributes include the range of restaurants available, and other services available such as food and wine storage and delivery, provision of drivers to take visitors around, and whether food growers allow food tasting.

Motivators for travel for food and wine experiences are

- having the opportunity to try different foods and wine
- time to interact with nature as well as experience food and wine
- indulging in a food and wine weekend
- a desire to find what was unique about the destination.

⁵ Food and Wine Tourism In New South Wales, Austrade, 2015

Consumer trends that provide implications and opportunities for agritourism development in the Cootamundra-Gundagai region include:



Paddock to plate

Food and agritourism experiences are a significantly expanding tourism opportunities as visitors increasingly look for local produce and paddock-to-plate experiences. Travellers are increasingly knowledgeable about and engaged in food and wine, and are seeking authentic, connective experiences.

Attractive culinary tourism experiences for high value travellers include

- Stories – provenance, production, craftsmanship of products and personalised culinary experiences Heritage – gourmet experiences which speak of a region's heritage and highlight local produce
- Wellness – balanced eating using fresh nutritious produce
- Occasions – experiences where the food takes centre stage at any price point from street food to fine dining



Immersive experiences

Though restaurants, bars and cafés are the primary interface between visitors and the food and wine sector, visitors are now looking for more immersive and educational experiences. Engagement with growers, sampling fresh produce, hands-on and educational activities that give greater insights into the produce and region are important drivers for today's travellers. This trend of immersive rather than passive experiences is right across tourism such as cycling trips, experiencing life like a local, and experiencing daily farm life.



Travelling off the beaten path

Travellers are seeking out destinations that other tourists haven't discovered yet. While some are looking for unique braggable experiences to share on social media, others are going offline with JOMO, or the 'Joy Of Missing Out' – choosing to enjoy your trip instead of worrying about how it looks on social media. The JOMO Traveller is looking to escape the hustle, opting to travel off-season to alternative destinations to avoid other Aussie holidaymakers. The ability to explore a place before it gets too popular is probably why JOMO trips are recording a 31% year on year increase among Australian travellers in 2020.



Healthy and wholesome food, Slow Food

Food and coffee culture, paddock to plate experiences, and health and well-being relating to food is high on consumers' agendas. Food-motivated trips are likely to make up 11% of trips in 2020, up 23% from 2019.



Backyard veggie gardening

A trend of recent years of backyard food production surged with the COVID19 lockdown. There is great interest in learning, both about growing and about how to use the grown ingredients such as fermenting and brewing.



Transformative travel

Travellers are looking for experiences that shape and stay with them, from interacting more with locals and learning a new skill to contributing something to the place they stay. More than half of travellers value a travel experience that positively changes them on a personal level. Australia has had a 44% year on year increase in travellers interested in embarking on a personal growth trip in 2020.



Slow travel

There has been 20% year on year increase in Australian travellers wanting to slow down and prioritise quality over quantity. Slow travel emphasises connection with the destination, travel companions and an unhurried pace. Slow travel embraces long walks and unscheduled activities for those who prioritise rest over sightseeing.



Green consumers and conscious travellers

Travellers are making far more informed and ethical choices about where they go, how they travel and what they take with them. Being environmentally aware, wanting to consume environmentally-sustainable products and experiences, and wishing to contribute and give back are major consumer trends affecting destinations, as is regenerative tourism⁶: tourism that gives back to the environment and communities instead of taking as opposed to the notion that business success means we have to do harm to the planet. There is a 103% year on year increase in interest for more eco-friendly trips in 2020.

⁶ Similar to regenerative agriculture which aims to restore soils and sequester carbon



COVID-19 and recession

COVID-19 is expected to impact travel behaviour for many months after the virus threat has gone. Some travel trends will include:

- Consumers want something to look forward to and will be keen to plan and book a holiday.
- Consumers will seek out simple, meaningful experiences.
- People will visit family and friends for emotional support and connection.
- Travel will not be taken for granted, with greater intentions around the planning to ensure it offers what they are looking for. During recessions, impulse purchases dramatically decline and travellers seek bargains. Those who manage household budgets (typically women) will search for detailed information on activities, experiences, events, reviews and prices.
- During a recession values and behaviours change. We become more concerned for others and with collectivism and move away from individualism. Materialism and possessions become less important. Volunteering and social tourism have a higher priority in a more inclusive society.
- There will be increased requirements around health and safety.
- Grey nomads may be slow to return to travel due to safety concerns, requiring destinations dependent on these travellers to explore new markets.
- During an economic slowdown, tourists tend to travel less, stay closer to home and seek simplicity. For example: value-based holidays based on basic facilities, meeting locals, and free time. Here, tourism is about the beach or the view from the mountain, and being less plugged in.
- Cities will be the least appealing destinations



Economic necessity

The supply side factor fuelling agritourism growth: tourism is now seen as a real diversification opportunity for Australian farmers. Factors influencing the decision to diversify into agritourism include

- Drought and extreme climatic conditions
- Drop in food sale prices (the percentage of the food sale price that farmers receive has dropped from 90% in 1910 to 10% today)
- Keeping grown children on the farm with new job opportunities
- Diversification to spread risk
- Resilience
- Cash flow
- Deregulation, for example, the deregulation of dairy industry is making it harder for farmers to make money of traditional distribution channels so they need to explore other options



Digital connection

Social media uptake across all demographics, interaction and sharing, social media advertising and e-mail marketing as primary marketing tools, increasing livestreaming, smartphone responsive websites... Ease and convenience of planning and having information easily available supports trip planning – and if it's not available, travellers will visit destinations where they can find information easily.

5. GAPS ANALYSIS

CURRENT STRENGTHS

- The region has a strong agricultural base, combined with attractive rural landscapes and distinct seasons
- Three highways pass through the region and a twice daily passenger rail, and there are good coach connections – over half of Australia's population is within a 7-hour drive
- There is a mix of existing agritourism product, including regional icons
- Council is embarking on a new Local Environmental Plan (LEP) and wants to be supportive of agritourism development
- Surrounding Shires have strong agritourism product and experiences that can be leveraged
- Large developments are in the pipeline that will result in hero agritourism experiences
- Strong existing entrepreneurs and business groups are actively driving growth and development
- New destination brands and good online presence exists for the region
- There is strong support from the State Government to grow regional tourism



GAPS IDENTIFIED

- Limited collaboration across the region (particularly across the two main towns)
- Lack of funds available locally to invest into projects and resources (heavy reliance on grants)
- The region is primarily made up of fewer landholders managing large properties, with a lack of smaller land holdings
- Paid agritourism experiences are sparse – no wineries open to the public, recent closure of agritourism businesses across the region, insufficient density of product
- Existing brand and marketing do not integrate or feature the agritourism story of the region, with limited bundling or packaging
- There is a lack of brand awareness for the region in general
- Lack of knowledge amongst farmers around how to diversify into tourism, and how to manage concerns around bio security and insurance
- Food outlets that feature local produce and open all weekend to cater for the travelers
- A simple and streamlined compliance process that is supported by a framework that is not impacted by staff turnover within Council



POTENTIAL IMPACTS

- Disjointed development across the region resulting in diluted brand awareness and appeal
- Inability to attract investment and to encourage further development in agritourism
- Lack of leadership and resourcing to support the activation of the plan
- Competing regions make it hard for Cootamundra-Gundagai to gain market share
- Inability to keep visitors in the region overnight and gain maximum yield
- A competitive attitude, rather than a cooperative attitude

6.3 VISITORS TO THE REGION

Domestic visitors to the Cootamundra–Gundagai region⁸

- Most travellers are couples, then solo travellers
- Stay 2 nights
- Spend \$276/trip or \$139/night
- Travel for holiday purposes almost 50% more than for visiting friends and relatives (VFR)

Core markets for Riverina Murray⁹

- VFR
- Grey Nomads (low yield, but have highest disposal incomes)
- Families (20% of overnight visitors)
- Business (16% of overnight visitors) – an opportunity for repeat visitation for leisure
- Working holiday makers
- Educational
- Event attendees

⁸ Local Government Area Profile 2018 for Cootamundra Gundagai, Tourism Research Australia

⁹ Riverina Murray Destination Management Plan 2018

7. AGRITOURISM VISITORS FOR THE REGION

Based on an assessment of current visitors, and the region's target markets, the target market best suited to a developing agritourism sector in Cootamundra-Gundagai is laid back touring couples aged 45-65.



Profile insights

- Domestic overnight visitors from Canberra/ACT, regional Victoria and regional NSW (within approximately 250km drive)
- Roadtripping through multiple destinations (8 nights on average)
- Interested in nature, scenery, food and wine, heritage and culture, and relaxing and enjoying the region at leisure

Current aligned product

- Murrumbidgee River and water activities, nature reserves, scenic drives, lookouts, bushwalking, cycling
- Unique accommodation and farmstays
- Campgrounds, free campsites and caravan parks
- Events showcasing local culture and agriculture
- Experiences available in spring and autumn (when weather is not too hot or cold)
- Quality food and wine experiences (Planted Cootamundra, Rusty Table, etc)
- Numerous heritage attractions and antiques shops
- Cultural attractions (Arts Centre Cootamundra, gallery)

Gaps to be filled

- Increase awareness of existing products (e.g. with itineraries and blog articles)
- Information on how experiences are connected (e.g. with itineraries and maps of where experiences are)
- Information on how the region connects with experiences beyond the Shire's borders that appeal to this market
- Information on affordable and value-for-money experiences
- Increase product available e.g. rail trail, Flash Jack's new restaurant, microbrewery, Old Gundagai Mill development, winery experiences, on-farm agritourism experiences and on-site food processing tourism experiences, etc

Other markets that agritourism products are suitable for include

- Daytrippers
- Short break travellers
- Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) (travellers visiting locals)
- Event attendees

8. EXISTING AND POTENTIAL AGRITOURISM EXPERIENCES¹⁰

The agritourism story of the Cootamundra–Gundagai region consists of staying on farms, discovering boutique and premium produce, and visiting boutique market farms amongst landscapes of vineyards and broadacre crops.

8.1 Existing agritourism product and experiences			
Cootamundra	Other northern towns	Gundagai	Other southern towns
Farmstays ¹¹			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Killcare Cottage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wallendbeen Park Farm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kimo Estate ¹² (incl. weddings) Highfield Farm and Woodland Hillview Tarrabandra Fishing Retreat Nimbo Fork Lodge¹³ Borambola Winery (+ cider + beer) ¹⁴ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rabbits Hut (Coolac) White Horse Farm (Coolac) Coolac Cabins Shearer's Quarters (Nangus) Brooklyn Springs Farm Escape¹⁵
Dining			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planted Cootamundra (local produce) Rusty Table Dusty Roads coffee roastery 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coffee Pedlar (not a focus on local produce) Dog on the Tuckerbox café sells local produce 	
Local produce			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cootamundra Butchery (meat + condiments) Buronga Organics Texel lamb Billabong Beef Jerky Pride of Pennington salad dressings Cootamundra Oil Seeds Honey Cereals Beef, lamb Conqueror Milling Outback Bakery (sourdough) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mirrool Creek Lamb (Riverina brand) Stockinpiggle pork (Stockinbingal) Cereals Beef, lamb 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wineries (not open to the public) (A. Retief cellar door is in Sydney) The Food Plot (CSA) Highfield Farm (mixed) Beef, lamb Gundagai Butcher Fig and Co (retail) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beef, lamb

¹⁰ Although significant effort was invested in developing an audit of the region's agritourism product, information on existing experiences is quite inaccessible to a researcher, highlighting how inaccessible information on the region's agritourism experiences is for visitors

¹¹ Many are Airbnb listings

¹² The region's key agritourism product with 117,00 followers on social media

¹³ In Tumut Shire on the border with CGRC

¹⁴ In Wagga Wagga Shire but uses Gundagai and Dog on the Tuckerbox branding

¹⁵ In Tumut Shire

Events			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sunday markets (monthly) Dog show Wattle Time Barn Dance B&S Ball Cootamundra Show Vintage machinery and tractor show 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Village Fair Markets (Stockinbingal) Wallendbeen Markets Wired Open Day Festival 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Popped up at Kimo Sundy in Gundy Market (monthly) Show Rodeo Tractor Pull Battle on the Bidgee Stockman's Challenge 	
Other			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wattle Cottage – seedlings sold at markets Milestones sculptures – tribute to wheat Damasque Rose Oil Farm – tours in summer Sustainable carbon farming tours Cootamundra Heritage Centre (museum) Conundrum Horse Handling Orana Horse Riding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Yard Studio (Stockinbingal) – on-farm art studio The Wired Lab (Muttama)¹⁶ – 'agri(culture)' project Wallendbeen Silo Art mural Dark Horse Stables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gundagai Historical Museum – farm machinery Gundagai Old Mill (ruin) – historical mill Blessed Bowen (wellness) Somerville Natural Therapies (wellness) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highfield Farm and Woodland (Mt Adrah) – farm tours and sells produce at markets
8.2 Pipeline and potential agritourism products and experiences			
Cootamundra	Other northern towns	Gundagai	Other southern towns
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buronga Organics accommodation Farm retreat for mental health treatment Distillery Conqueror Mill tours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wallendbeen station masters residence development Wallendbeen silo mural Cootamundra to Tumblong via Gundagai rail trail (opens possibilities for en route agritourism experiences) Thomson sheep farm (Muttama) (wool dying) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flash Jacks restaurant Kimo Estate expansion (microbrewery, boutique hotel in homestead, market garden, stalls, schools program) Kimo Estate food and wine festival (either spring or autumn) Gundagai Old Mill redevelopment Borambola Wines multi-function events venue (weddings, conferencing) Tumblong Hills cellar door Rail trail Farm gate stall for The Food Plot On farm corporate retreats Paddock to plate restaurant Farm with edible and ornamental gardens Additional farmstays Wedding/reception venue Kayak tours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dog on the Tuckerbox new tourism attraction Valley Vista (Coolac) – farm tours Highfield – farm stay

¹⁶ Wired Lab's 'agri(culture)' project has contemporary artists collaborating with farmers and rural communities to produce arts experiences exploring agrarian culture

¹⁷ It is currently uncertain if this will be an agritourism product, but quite likely (e.g. incorporating local food and beverages)

8.3 RECOMMENDED AGRITOURISM PRODUCT AND EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT

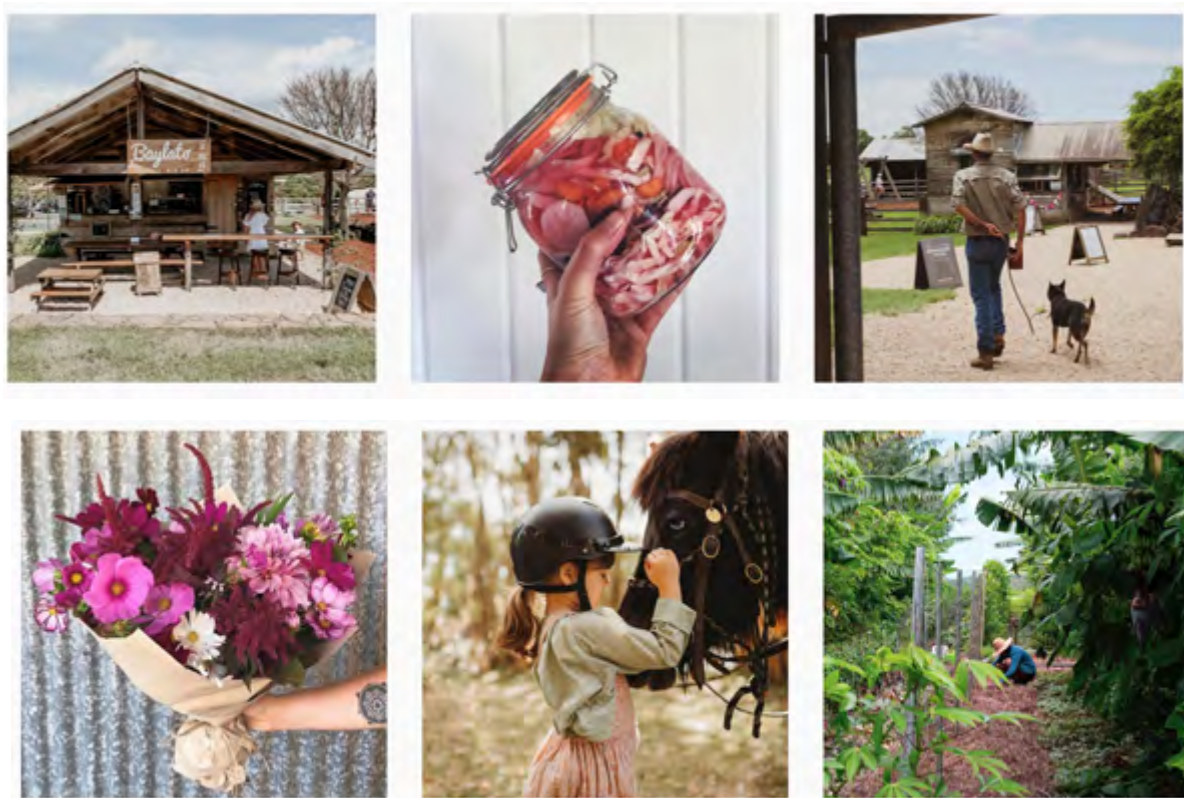
Following the strategic review and analysis of the existing tourism and agriculture product in the Cootamundra-Gundagai region, along with an analysis of regional, state and national agritourism reports and papers, a series of gaps were revealed. The following recommended product and experience development opportunities will help the region realise its potential as an agritourism destination.

It is recommended that an investment attraction or grant funding applications focus on these developments and opportunities over the coming 3-5 years.



1. DOG ON THE TUCKERBOX REGIONAL FOOD HUB

This attraction is currently part of an existing major development taking place, though inclusions have not been established yet. A showcase of produce from Cootamundra, Gundagai, Snowy Valleys and Hilltops would add value to this development and provide a gateway to a major food-producing region in NSW. Inclusion of a regional produce café/ food outlet and Visitor Information Centre to promote the agritourism across the region is recommended.



"This Food Hub on the Hume Highway will provide an anchor point and a hook to draw more visitors off the highway and into these destinations."

Location:

Hume Hwy (8km north of Gundagai)

Benchmark examples:

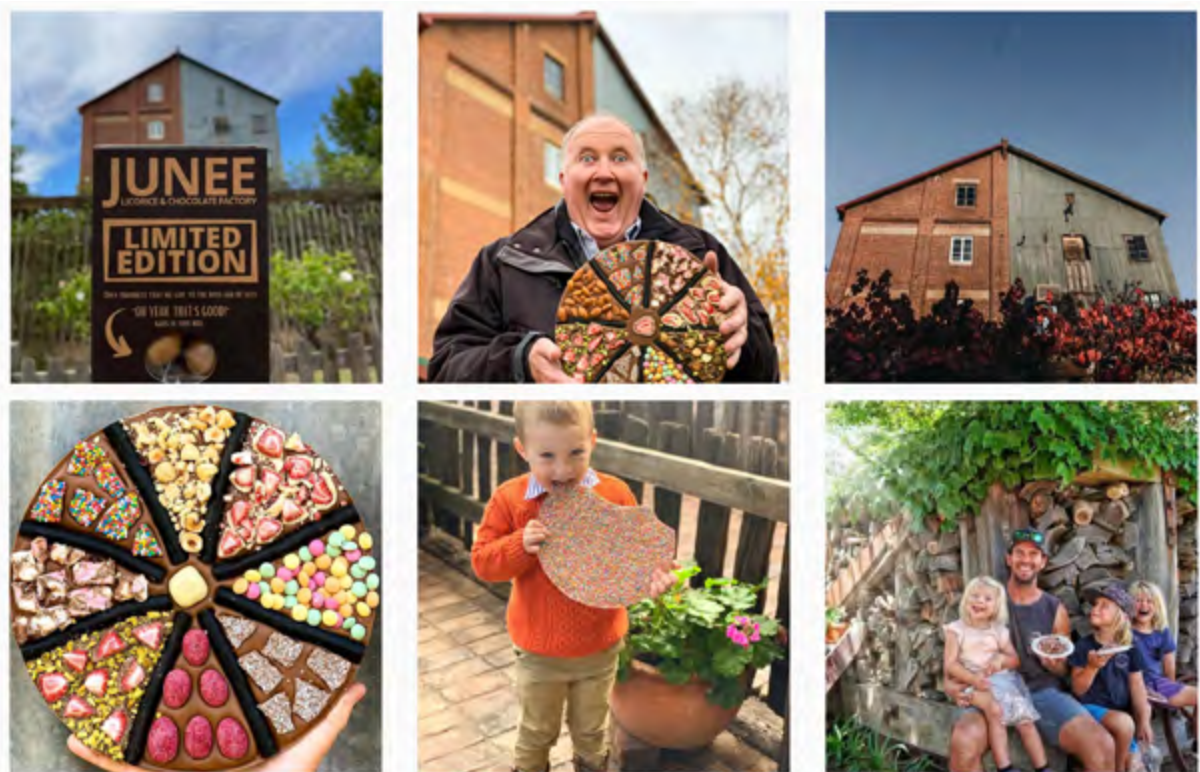
[The Farm](#), Byron Bay NSW

2. THE OLD MILL REDEVELOPMENT

Council has commenced the process of calling for expressions of interest for the development of this site. Based on the review and analysis that has taken place with this plan it is strongly recommended that this development includes an immersive experience that connects visitors to local produce and agriculture. There is opportunity for this mill site to link in with the Coolamon Cheese Factory and Junee Licorice & Chocolate Factory, to create another iconic repurposed building that provides a quality hero tourism attraction.

Some suggested uses of the site include one or a combination of the following:

- Artisan bakery using local produce
- Winery cellar door – wine collective to showcase all wine from the region
- Craft beverage manufacture
- Tourism facilities (accommodation, function centre, etc)
- Destination dining with a focus on local produce
- Special events celebrating and promoting local produce



Location:
Gundagai

Benchmark examples:

[Coolamon Cheese Factory](#),

Coolamon NSW

[Junee Licorice & Chocolate Factory](#),

Junee NSW

3. FARM STAYS

Farm stays are popular accommodation types and with the creation of Airbnb and Hipcamp, there is now enhanced opportunity for farmers to enter this sector with minimal fuss. Council is encouraged to support farmers in renovating old shearing sheds and workers quarters to create tourism accommodation, or riverside campsites on their land. This support could be in the form of waiving development application fees and by making permitting straight-forward.

Note: Australian Regional Tourism is currently working in partnership with Airbnb to support agritourism development across regional Australia - [learn more here](#)



★ 4.99 (81)
Farm stay · Lower Mangrove
The Loft; Kyangatha - waterside retreat
\$175 AUD / night



★ 4.87 (107)
Farm stay · Laguna
Fernances Creek Farmstay: Sleep in a Vineyard
\$98 AUD / night
\$98.00 AUD total



★ 4.97 (72)
Farm stay · Lower Mangrove
The Barn; Kyangatha - relax and rejuvenate
\$195 AUD / night



★ 4.98 (192)
Farm stay · Robertson
Spiral House - Luxury Couples Retreat
\$262 AUD / night



★ 4.99 (275)
Farm stay · Fitzroy Falls
Japanese Studio Fitzroy Falls
\$240 AUD / night



★ 5.0 (44)
Farm stay · Kangaroo Valley
Terrewah Farm sustainable Guesthouse
\$326 AUD / night

Location:
Region wide

Benchmark examples:
[Scenic Rim](#) QLD on Hipcamp
[Aussie Farm Stays](#) on Airbnb

4. COOLAC/WALLEND BEEN PROVIDORES AND HARVEST TRAILS

Develop a master plan for Coolac and/or Wallendbeen to encourage small farm providore and farm gate development, creating an agritourism hotspot just off the Hume, Burley Griffin and Olympic Highways, which provides produce direct to consumers and suppliers.

Council is encouraged to re-zone a section of land to allow for small titles and providores, enabling tree changers from Canberra, Sydney and Melbourne (in addition to locals) to invest in land to develop value add premium agricultural products that can be sold directly to consumers and suppliers with farm gate sales, pick your own sales and harvest trails.



Location:

Coolac and/or
Wallendbeen

Benchmark examples:

[Harvest Trails](#)

[Northern Rivers](#) NSW

[Freeman's Organic Farm](#),
Currumbin QLD, who have
successfully diversified into tourism

5. SEASONAL FESTIVALS

Further developing existing events such as Cootamundra Wattle Time, it is recommended to develop and host two larger-scale spring and autumn seasonal 'harvest' events (on a long weekend where possible) of food produced within 100km of the Shire. Include tasting plates, product/wine tasting, showcases of local chefs and produce, and associated events such as farm tours and on-farm meals. Use the event to build networking and collaboration between producers, and to trial new products, such as short term PR collaborations (e.g. Wagga's strawberry beer collaboration between a strawberry farm and a microbrewery).



Location:

Cootamundra and
Gundagai

Benchmark examples:

[Harvest Festival](#), Northern Rivers
NSW

[Orange FOOD Week](#), Orange NSW

[Scenic Rim Eat Local Week](#), Scenic
Rim QLD

6. TOUR OPERATORS

There is opportunity to attract tour companies or local entrepreneurs to develop and deliver new tours that bring together and showcase the agritourism across the region.

Tour suggestions include:

- Tour of wheat farm and mill
- Conqueror Mill tours
- Tour combining meatworks and sheep farm
- Regenerative farming
- Region wide farm tours i.e. visit multiple farms for half or full day

Tap into the new tour company opening in Temora focused on the 55+ market¹⁷ and Riverina Agricultural Tours.



Location:

Region wide

Benchmark examples:

[Cotton Farm & Gin Tour](#), Moree NSW

[Yakult](#), Dandenong South VIC – tour of working factory

[Agricultural Tours](#) Riverina , NSW

[Southern Forests Regional Tours](#), WA

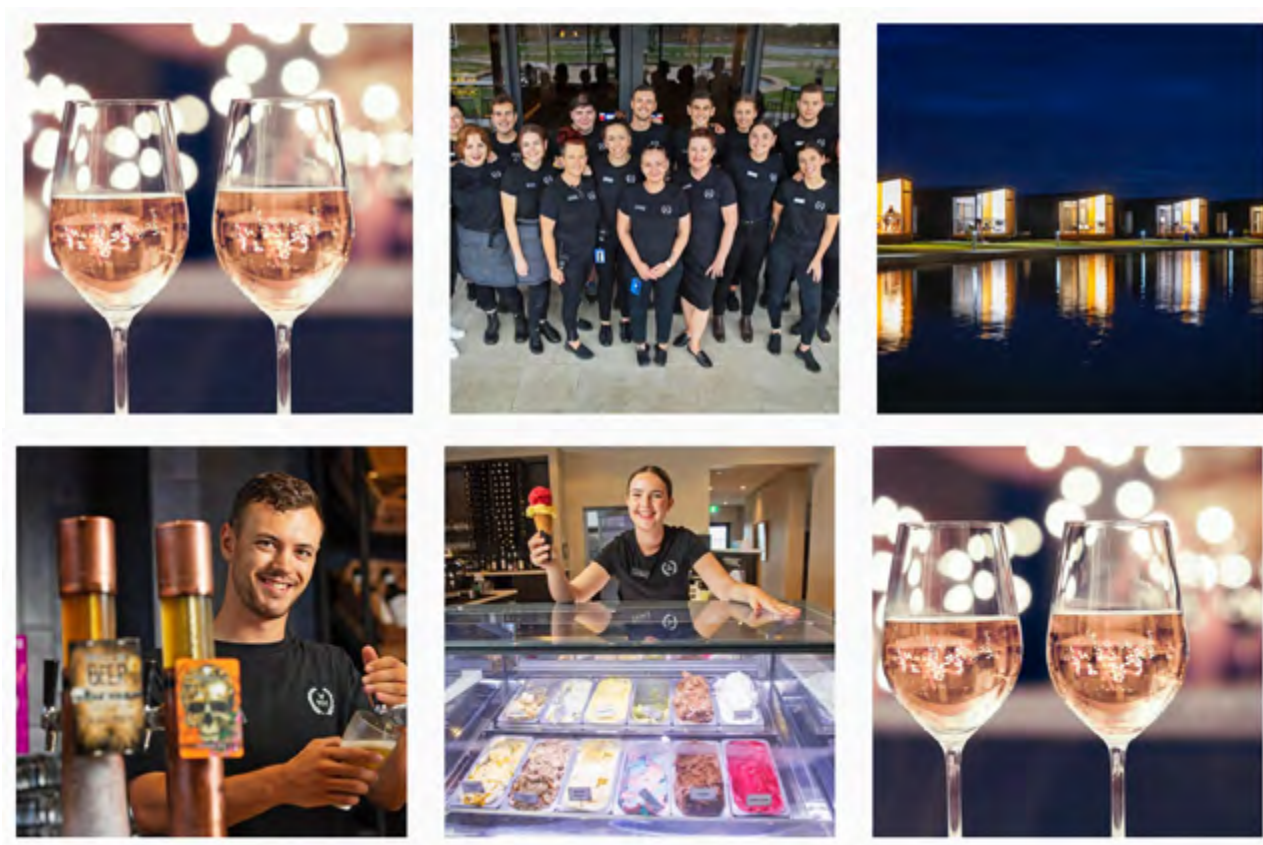
[Creative Tours & Events](#), Maroochydore QLD – private tour operator bundles product

¹⁷ Contact Wayne Fountain 0419 771 038 waynef@ilovecruising.com.au

7. BREWERY/DISTILLERY/CELLAR DOOR

Unique boutique drink experiences are a growing trend, with opportunity for the region to attract investment into a brewery, distillery or cellar door (or all of these). This provides an opportunity to use local produce to create distinctive drinks connected to the agricultural story of the region, whether that be beer, wine, gin, whiskey, cider or something completely different.

Note: there are some existing operators that are exploring these opportunities, with Council encouraged to support their developments.



Location:
Region wide

Benchmark examples:

[Whitton Malt House](#), Whitton NSW (field to glass)

[Barellan Beer](#), Barellan NSW

[Husk Distillers](#), Northern Rivers NSW (paddock to bottle)

[Silos Estate](#), Berry NSW – cellar door with accommodation and functions

[Heifer Station](#), Orange NSW – family friendly cellar door and wedding venue

9. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

9.1 VISION

Cootamundra–Gundagai region is known for being supportive of developing new agritourism businesses and has a sufficient concentration of agritourism experiences to support increased agritourism visitation.

9.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The overarching aims of developing agritourism in Cootamundra–Gundagai are to support increased

- numbers of visitors to the region
- visitor length of stay
- visitor expenditure, especially on local products and services
- visitor satisfaction so they return and/or tell others

Because there are few agritourism businesses in the Cootamundra–Gundagai region, according to Council's Agricultural... Agricultural Tourism Issues Paper, initiatives aimed at increasing agritourism in the region and achieving the strategic aims 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 and streamlined planning processes to support the development of agritourism
- Attracting more tourists to make agritourism a more profitable and sustainable enterprise.

A targeted and focused approach is necessary to achieve outcomes from agritourism.



9.3 IMPLEMENTATION

These objectives should be implemented in two phases:

1

PHASE 1: ESTABLISH FOUNDATIONS (2021-2022)

Build awareness and appeal of the region's existing agritourism product through marketing and experience development

Improve Council's planning process and LEP to be more supportive of developing new agritourism businesses

Work with partners to develop and implement an agritourism business development program that supports producers to develop their agritourism offerings

2

PHASE 2: ONGOING DEVELOPMENT (2023 ONWARDS)

Proactively attract investment into agritourism and support new product development



10. PRIORITY PROJECTS

Objectives			
Support existing agritourism operators	Support new product development	Provide land use zoning and streamline planning processes	Attract more tourists
Phase 1: ESTABLISH FOUNDATIONS – Marketing and experience development			
Work with partners to develop an agritourism business development program that supports producers to develop their agritourism offerings		Make necessary amendments to the LEP to increase opportunities for agritourism development Develop and implement an efficient streamlined approvals process for agritourism development	Create agritourism brand story Develop experiences by bundling existing products into itineraries and a map Hire a PR agency to capture and promote stories of producers, and build a content bank of images, videos and stories Create an alliance with Hilltops and Snowy Valleys Councils (along a corridor between Canberra and Wagga Wagga) to collaborate on marketing and product development projects ¹⁹
Support existing agritourism operators	Support new product development	Attract more tourists	
Phase 2: ONGOING DEVELOPMENT – Investment attraction and product development			
'Secure funding and implement the Agritourism Business Development Program in collaboration with industry partners		Invest in strategic, targeted marketing	
		Secure a destination attraction at the Gundagai Old Mill	
		Host a spring and an autumn food festival	
		Proactively seek to attract targeted investment with an agritourism investment prospectus to develop new agritourism products to fill identified gaps	

¹⁹ The Brindabella Road upgrade will create a loop to Canberra and an opportunity to leverage Canberra Airport's domestic international visitors

11. PARTNERS IN THE ACTIVATION OF THE PLAN

Organisation	Role
Gundagai-Cootamundra Regional Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate and enable: Ease the painful and off-putting process of developing a new agritourism business with a concierge – one contact at Council for all new agritourism product development. This concierge will also run a business development program to support farmers to develop and finesse agritourism products Develop and implement the agritourism business development program Strategic activation of the plan and advocacy to state and federal government to attract funding and investment support Supporting the development of new agritourism product and experiences (including events) across the region Destination marketing Experience development (trails, itineraries, map) <p>It is recommended that Council seek funding for a human resource to focus on agritourism development and to implement this plan's priority projects.</p>
On the Road to Gundagai	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Industry collaboration Industry marketing and cross promotion
Cootamundra Development Corporation (CDC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the implementation of the agritourism business development program
Gundagai Regional Enhancement Group (GREG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the implementation of the agritourism business development program Run events to draw visitation, including high-quality spring and autumn local produce/foodie events
Gundagai Tourism Action Committee and Cootamundra Tourism Action Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May support agritourism development with an agritourism development working group comprised of members of both groups <p>It is recommended that the two tourism action groups are merged into one Section 355 Committee of Council to assist whole of Shire product development, promotion and capacity building.</p>
Destination Riverina Murray	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marketing Industry development Funding support
Service NSW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regulatory and compliance support

12. CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS AND MEASURES OF SUCCESS

In order to ensure success in the activation of the plan, a series of critical success factors have been identified.

1. collaboration across the region
2. supportive and enabling council outlook
3. adequate resourcing
4. encouraging planning department with a concierge approach to support a streamlined compliance process
5. farmers and producers having necessary skills in tourism
6. effective biosecurity management

The performance of Council and its partners in the implementation of this plan will be monitored and assessed against the following measures of success²⁰.

	Measures of success	Targets for 2023
	Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industry and community and business groups working as one collective across Cootamundra and Gundagai • Alliance with Snowy Valleys and Hilltops formed and active • Increased bundling and packaging of product and experience taking place
	Satisfaction with compliance process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council implements new streamlined compliance process which is supported by a concierge/case management approach • Industry satisfaction levels increased • An all-round supportive and encouraging mentality is adopted across Council
	Brand reputation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased year-round visitation • Increased digital engagement • Media exposure around agritourism in the region • Increased enquiry for agritourism experiences in the Visitor Information Centres
	Increased agritourism product and experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A minimum of one new major development as per the recommended development projects • Farmers across the region joining in on business development program and diversifying into tourism • Existing operators introducing new experiences across the region based on identified gaps and opportunities
	Increased industry capability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmers across the region actively participating in business development program

²⁰ Standard overnight visitation and visitor spend targets are assumed; however, targets have not been set as baseline visitor data is not available.

13. ACTIVATION PLAN



13.1 DEVELOP AN AGRITOURISM BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

This program will provide local producers with clear information to help them understand the tourism industry and how they can diversify into this industry to support and supplement their agricultural enterprise. It will build their skills and provide opportunity to learn from others who have gone before them.

DRIVER:

Council – Manager Community and Culture

PURPOSE:

- Build critical mass of agritourism product offering by supporting new product development
- Fill current gaps in offering
- Add stories that can be told about the region
- Demonstrate the value of agritourism to a business owner, and how easy it can be to add a lucrative element to their business which is a source of pride and stable income
- Establish strong foundations to permit the development trade-ready agritourism packages in the future.

RECOMMENDED PROGRAM INCLUSIONS:

- Destination Riverina Murray's annual six-month [Destination Inspiration](#) tourism business development and mentoring program – promote to local producers and operators
- Factsheets on how to develop several types of agritourism products, such as Hipcamp camp sites²¹, farm stays, cellar doors, event venues²² (e.g. a fact sheet that outlines the process for turning a shearers quarters into accommodation). Survey

local producers and operators to find out what products they would like to develop, and develop factsheets for the most common one.

- A pack/webpage/booklet which outlines all the necessary requirements across all departments of Council, along with contacts of all consultants' applicants need to engage with, examples of what is correct (e.g. what a sign has to say) and templates such as for a biosecurity plan.
- A grant opportunities calendar (grants that are relevant to agritourism development).
- Smooth DA process (per Section 13.3).
- Mentoring program²³, including one on one mentoring²⁴ on developing new appealing agritourism products, improving the visitor experience, and product marketing and distribution; and discussing development possibilities with Destination NSW's Industry Development team on experiences that would appeal to desired target markets, focused on the unique offerings of producers' brands.
- Training program²⁵ with inclusions such as
 - How to develop an on-trend agritourism experience that fits around farming commitments
 - Assessing and analysing a business opportunity
 - Developing a business plan

²¹ Previously Youcamp

²² Based on a survey of which developments are of most interest to the region's producers/business owners

²³ Consider modelling on Women in Business Wagga Wagga program

²⁴ Such as by agritourism development agency [Regionality](#)

²⁵ Use existing resources such as Destination NSW's [NSW First Program](#) and [Box Hill's](#) micro credentialed short course, '[Promote and develop agritourism](#)'



- Establishing risk management processes including for staff, biosecurity and emergency management
- How to allow visitors to take part in or observe food production processes
- Improving the visitor experience
- Running events such as dinners that showcase local produce
- Storytelling: food/wine production, where ingredients come from, how ingredients can be used, sustainable practices
- Providing high quality customer service; providing a social and educational experience
- Having frontline staff such as wait staff knowledgeable about local produce
- Storytelling, effective digital marketing, collaborative marketing and channels of distribution for tourism products
- How to list your agritourism experiences on the Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW), TripAdvisor and Google My Business
- Managing customer safety, risk and insurance
- Small business management
- Provide bite-size training by the Destination Network (if possible) (on tourism) and Council (on regulations) where and when producers gather e.g. at agricultural association meetings.
- Networking program (combining provision of information, training and networking) to bring together those with drive, passion, and vision, and those who can be inspired by them. Leverage gatherings that producers already attend where possible.
- A digital marketing audit of each existing agritourism business in the region with improvement instructions.²⁶
- Regular communication e.g. a quarterly agritourism development newsletter.
- An annual agritourism forum with guest speakers and successful agritourism operators from other regions.
- An interagency agritourism group meeting biannually, bringing together different departments and external stakeholders to review agritourism developments in the pipeline and discuss new ones to keep agritourism on the radar and ensure all stakeholders are working collectively to support developments.
- An annual business awards program to reward excellence in agritourism (run through an existing business awards program if possible or as part of the annual forum).

²⁶ Such as by [Tourism Tribe](#)

- A sister-region relationship with a successful agritourism region for producers e.g. Scenic Rim in QLD.
- An inspirational familiarisation tour of the sister region for producers and Council's planning and tourism staff.

ACTIVATION STEPS:

1. Build on this plan's [agritourism audit](#) to create and maintain a database of existing and potential agritourism operators. Include how to reach them, details on producers' interest in agritourism, and the time of year they can serve visitors.
2. Lobby Destination Riverina Murray to increase the number of networking events they run, and develop an agritourism network to help agritourism operators feel connected and to support collaborative activities. If unsuccessful, use the alliance with Hilltops and Snowy Valleys Councils (see Section 13.7) to run a collaborative program.
3. Leverage the support of Southern Harvest near Canberra which
 - facilitates networking (quarterly gatherings)
 - can connect producers with supporting organisations and agritourism mentors
 - facilitates connections between growers and consumers

- runs a CSA of multiple producers
- runs workshops for producers and the public
- runs Bungendore Harvest Festival and a weekly farmers market
- runs a public education component

4. Have the development program shovel ready for grant applications.

5. Secure funding to implement the program.

TIMELINE:

2021 (and ongoing)

13.2 AMEND LEP TO INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES FOR AGRITOURISM DEVELOPMENT

An amended LEP will support and encourage increased agritourism product development, increasing the opportunity for producers to develop new products. An LEP that is agritourism friendly and aligns with this plan is critical to ensure successful development of the region as an Agritourism destination.

DRIVER:

Council – Manager Development, Building & Compliance

PURPOSE:

- Support income diversification for producers by permitting land usage for agritourism
- Streamline Council requirements to allow and be supportive of agritourism development
- Cater for the needs of small-scale producers/providores as well as large-scale producers

ACTIVATION STEPS:

1. Seek input from producers, existing and potential agritourism operators.
2. Include changes in Council's LEP that are relevant to and supportive of agritourism development, such as those as outlined in Council's Rural Lands Strategy 2020:
 - 1.1 Minimum lot size
 - 1.2 Dwelling entitlements
 - 1.3 Dual occupancies
 - 1.4 Agricultural subdivision
 - 1.6 Innovation and enterprise support
 - 2.1 "Open" zones
 - 2.2 Miscellaneous permissible uses

3. Similarly, create a subsection of the Development Control Plan under business and industrial development which deals with agritourism and artisan food/providore businesses (Action 2.3 of the Rural Lands Strategy).
4. Use clear, plain language in LEP or provide an interpretive version for agritourism development that is in clear, plain language.
5. Provide for a variety of smaller, more affordable lots in the LEP and proactively promote to attract tree changers from the ACT and Sydney.

TIMELINE:

2021

BUDGET:

(Internal)

13.3 DEVELOP AN APPROVALS PROCESS FOR AGRITOURISM DEVELOPMENT

A smoother process with fewer frustrations for business owners will reduce one of the biggest barriers to new product development in the region, and a cause of stress and frustration with Council.

DRIVER:

Council – Manager Development, Building & Compliance

PURPOSE:

- Reduce the major barrier to new and expanded agritourism product of development approvals (DA) and frustration with the DA process

EXAMPLE:

- Scenic Rim Regional Council (QLD) uses a case manager approach to new agritourism development. The Council is proactively supportive of new agritourism development, in part because they want new stories to use in PR promotion of the region.

ACTIVATION STEPS:

1. Have a resolution by or instructions from the Councillors to the planners to find a way to support new agritourism development (without frustrating applicants) (i.e. change an attitude of strict interpretation of rules to a supportive interpretation of rules; incorporate flexibility). Measure and follow up on this over time.
2. Provide a pack/webpage/booklet at the start of the DA process, which outlines all the necessary requirements across all departments of Council, along with contacts of all consultants' applicants need to engage, examples of what is correct (e.g.

what a sign has to say) and templates such as for a biosecurity plan.

3. Permit a trial of tourism activities before submission of a DA.
4. Implement the recommendations of Service NSW:²⁷
 - Provide mentoring for and supervision of less-experienced planning staff around projects that don't fit in the box. Connect planning staff with senior planning staff mentors in agritourism destinations who have successfully smoothed the path for new agritourism development.
 - Use a case management approach to new agritourism development – have one point of contact at Council for producers to contact to facilitate the development application and other needs within Council. This person is available to be called on for help with Council obstacles. This will ensure advice from the Economic Development and Tourism staff does not contradict advice from the planning staff.
 - Provide all planning information all in one location in clear, plain language – everything operators need to consider when developing and expanding an agritourism business, including clear information about exempt development. Provide examples of what is correct e.g. what a sign has to say.
 - Provide all planning requirements up-front, before the applicant begins the DA process.

²⁷ See Appendix 14.4



- Provide clear communication about rules and expectations.
- Provide pragmatic assistance before and during the DA process.
- Council's planner should always visit the site at the beginning of the DA process.
- Align fees with the number of customers, not with the size of a building.
- Consider fee waivers for agritourism developments to support a sufficient concentration of product in the region to attract visitation

TIMELINE:

2021

BUDGET:

(Internal)



5/kg

Carrots
(orange)
2.20/lb

13.4 CREATE AN AGRITOURISM BRAND STORY FOR THE REGION

The brand story will be the framework for the promotion of the region's agritourism experiences (the focus is on the story that the region tells, and how it is told, not on a logo). In order to be recognised as an agritourism destination a strong brand story that captures the essence of the region and the distinctive difference/s is essential.

DRIVER:

Council – Manager Community and Culture

PURPOSE:

- Communicate to potential visitors the appeal of the destination in marketing tactics
- A framework for agritourism operators to align their story within

INCLUSIONS:

- Brand story
- Supporting marketing copy and key messages
- Photo library, video content
- Producer stories

ACTIVATION STEPS:

1. Secure funding
2. Hire a marketing agency to develop the story, copy and key messages (see Section 13.6 re photo library and stories)
3. Hire a photographer and videographer to build a content bank of images and videos (concurrently with the development of the story bank to capture imagery for the producer stories. See Section 13. 6)
4. Use the brand elements in marketing the region's agritourism products

TIMELINE:

2022

BUDGET:

\$120,000

13.5 BUNDLE PRODUCTS INTO ITINERARIES AND A MAP

To overcome the region's low concentration of agritourism experiences, and the lack of easily accessible information available online on what does exist, the bundling of existing products and experiences will clearly show potential visitors that the region is worth their effort to visit.

DRIVER:

Council – Manager Community and Culture

PURPOSE:

- Provide visitors with compelling reasons to visit the region
- Provide visitors with easily-accessible information to help them see the concentration of experiences in the region, and support trip planning

INCLUSIONS:

- Agritourism micro-website
- Itineraries – seasonal (e.g. what to do in winter; what to do in summer), demographic-specific (e.g. itineraries for families) and niche-interest options.

Include both paid attractions and attractions to support extended length of stay such as picnic, swimming and fishing spots, dump points, and river access points.

- A back roads scenic drive map highlighting attractions, farm stays, picnic spots, where to buy local produce for a picnic hamper, rail trail, fishing spots, and seasonal farming activities. Promote the seasonal farming activities that can be seen via this map. This will provide visitors with multiple attractions that can provide 1–2 days of activities, which is necessary to inspire food and wine trips.

EXAMPLE:

The [Canola Trail](#) includes itineraries themed by interests such as antiques shopping, for foodies, and for nature lovers.



ACTIVATION STEPS:

1. Use the agritourism audit and knowledge of the region's tourism products to bundle experiences into itineraries for the target markets' interests.
2. Have a graphic designer map the itineraries to brand.
3. Load the itineraries and map to a new agritourism micro website which will focus on the region's agritourism story, local produce, and stories of producers ('meet the growers'). Link to the agritourism microsite from each tourism website to provide easily accessible, up to date information on the region's agritourism experiences²⁸. Necessary online information includes websites that help visitors plan their trip including places to visit along the way. The 'journey' to a destination is increasing in importance so information on things to see and do along the way, and tools such as trip planners on websites enables travellers to plan and maximise their food and wine experience. Important information to share online includes²⁹

- where/how to eat fresh, locally grown food for breakfast, lunch and dinner
- where to buy local produce in its various forms
- arts/crafts shops/markets
- short drives to places of interest near the main destination

- 'interest' stops on the way on the journey from travellers' homes to the region
- where to talk with local growers about their produce
- where to indulge (day spa or massage)
- where to learn something new
- entertainment and nightlife
- where to experience nature and outdoor activities

TIMELINE:

2022

BUDGET:

\$15,000 (graphic design and development of micro site)

²⁸ An example is www.victoriashighcountry.com.au/food-wine-beer/produce-farm-gates

²⁹ Food and Wine Tourism in NSW, 2015, Tourism Research Australia

13.6 CAPTURE AND SHARE THE REGION'S STORIES

Rather than advertising, the region will focus promotional activity on connecting potential visitors with locals, and life as a local; both strong trends in what captures people's attention, and inspires them to travel, and to share their experience with friends. Using storytelling to promote the region will help make the emotional connection and provide a rich marketing message for potential visitors.

DRIVER:

Council – Manager Community and Culture

PURPOSE:

- Cost-effective and 'word of mouth' publicity about the region's agritourism attractions

INCLUSIONS:

- A content bank of images and stories
- Media database

EXAMPLE:

South Burnett (QLD) hired a PR agency to compile 20 stories on producers, wineries, tourism operators, events and local characters, and pitch them to relevant media. The stories were used to develop media releases, and were available for ongoing use in social media, on the tourism website as content pages and blog articles, and for future media pitches. Some stories were bundled (e.g. of all the wineries) and sent as a kit to relevant media. Of the pitches made in just four months, the estimated AVE (advertising value equivalent i.e. ad rate x 4) for published articles was over a million dollars, which did not include radio interviews, online news articles, monthly event listing distribution, or long lead media articles. Close to 870,000 in source markets were reached.

ACTIVATION STEPS:

1. Secure funding for the project
2. Hire a PR agency to capture and promote stories of the region's producers and agritourism experiences, including events. Have the agency provide legacy benefits such as a targeted media database (long and short lead media viewed and read in target source markets).
3. Host a media familiarisation tour. Have the visiting journalists and targeted influencers provide legacy benefits such as imagery.

TIMELINE:

2022

BUDGET:

\$70,000 (PR agency and media famil)

13.7 DEVELOP AN ALLIANCE WITH HILLTOPS AND SNOWY VALLEYS COUNCILS

This collaboration will build a density of experiences in a corridor between the source markets of Wagga Wagga and Canberra, both increasing the number of experiences available for visitors, and connecting with two main source markets.

Taking a collective approach to destination development and marketing provides a competitive edge for regions and gives a more compelling reason for visitors to visit.

DRIVER:

Council – Manager Community and Culture

STEPS:

- Create a competitive and compelling proposition as a regional agritourism destination
- Collaborate on marketing and product development projects to reduce costs and maximise outcomes
- Leverage Thrive Riverina activity

3. Schedule quarterly meetings to discuss projects and collaborative initiatives.
4. In the future there is scope to consider a more formal arrangement similar to [Northern Rivers Food](#) that could be the key industry group to drive agritourism projects across all three LGA's (with close support from each council)

TIMELINE:

2021 (and ongoing)

BUDGET:

(internal) + some of the marketing budget allocation can be used for collaborative activity

ACTIVATION STEPS:

1. Facilitate an initial meeting of the three councils (tourism and/or economic development managers) to determine interest and commitment
2. Develop a Memorandum of Understanding that fosters a positive and collaborative approach to developing the 'corridor' as a strong agritourism destination

13.8 SECURE FUNDING AND IMPLEMENT THE AGRITOURISM BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM IN COLLABORATION WITH INDUSTRY PARTNERS

Once developed, this program will be rolled out to producers to support skill and knowledge development that will assist the decision to develop new agritourism products.

DRIVER:

Council - Manager Community and Culture

ACTIVATION STEPS:

1. Based on the recommended inclusions in section 13.1 roll out the desired elements of the business development program.
2. Use the PR stories to build local awareness of agritourism products and community pride, and educate local producers, businesses, retailers, Councillors, and the general community about what agritourism is, the value of agritourism, and how to start to engage in developing an agritourism offering.
3. Facilitate an annual agritourism forum. Have presentations by diverse successful agritourism operators and by regions that have successfully developed agritourism, and have participants each share what they are working on, want to work on, challenges they are facing, etc, to make Council aware of issues or collaborative opportunities. Celebrate new agritourism developments in the

region by sharing the stories of how they were developed (to inspire new development). Have a clear desired outcome to achieve to ensure producers feel there is value in the forum.

4. Encourage producers to always speak with Council planning and tourism staff at the earliest of stages of considering a new tourism business.
5. Have a project for agritourism operators and others to work on together, such as the spring and autumn harvest festivals

TIMELINE:

2022

BUDGET:

Approximately \$100,000 to deliver all elements of the program (this will vary depending on extent of program)

³⁰ See Section 13.12

³¹ A second phase of the program could include an [accredited locavore](#) program, using 'regional heroes' such as wine makers, food producers and chefs.

13.9 ATTRACT AGRITOURISM INVESTMENT

Council will proactively try to draw new private and public investment into the region to fill strategic product and experience gaps in the region's agritourism offering

DRIVER:

Council – Manager Community and Culture

PURPOSE:

- Inspire investors and tree changers to invest in developing new agritourism products and experiences in the region.

INCLUSIONS:

- Business cases
- Investment prospectus

STEPS:

1. Secure funding to engage an economist/consultant to develop robust business cases for the recommended agritourism product and experience developments (see Section 8.3).

2. Develop an agritourism investment prospectus based on filling identified product gaps (the recommended developments in Section 8.3). Ensure projects are shovel ready for future investment attraction and government funding support
3. Use the prospectus to proactively seek to attract targeted investment and new businesses.
4. Council to pursue a targeted development approach to fill identified gaps, such as by opening a parcel of land for development (e.g. 20 acre lots) to attract food businesses and tree changers.

TIMELINE:

2022 (and ongoing)

BUDGET:

\$250,000 (business cases)



13.10 INVEST IN STRATEGIC MARKETING

Strategic, targeted marketing will build on the development of an agritourism brand story, website content, stories, and itineraries.

Sharing stories and content to help build brand awareness and appeal is critical to building the region as an agritourism destination.

DRIVER:

Council – Manager Community and Culture

PURPOSE:

- Promote the region to target markets to inspire them to visit
- Support owners of existing agritourism products with distribution and marketing

INCLUSIONS:

- If there is interest amongst producers, have a co-operative Cootamundra-Gundagai stall at nearby markets, particularly in source markets such as Capital Region Farmers Market and Southside Farmers Market in Canberra and the Riverina Producers Market in Wagga, to promote the region's produce and agritourism experiences. This could be done in collaboration with Thrive Riverina and could use the Taste Riverina brand.

STEPS:

1. Improve visitor statistics collection by organising Council assets (visitor information centres, museums, popular attractions and nature reserves) and tourism operators to collaboratively gather visitor statistics: demographics, motivations for visiting, and preferred experiences³² using opt-in GDPR/privacy-compliant QR codes with a link to a short survey; and for accommodations to join [STR](#) for regular region-wide accommodation occupancy reports. This will fine-tune target market identification, supporting more effective marketing campaigns and aligned product development.
2. Secure funding for destination marketing and brand activation (aim for three years of funding to allow for consistency).
3. Develop and implement a strategic and targeted marketing plan in collaboration with Hilltops and Snowy Valleys Councils. Focus on building the day trip and weekend holiday market from Wagga Wagga (1h), Canberra (2h), and Victoria (2h to the border), particularly strategic and targeted activity into the ACT, using day trips from Gundagai as the key message. Measure and review effectiveness of all marketing activities, and adjust to improve ROI over time.
4. Look for opportunities to leverage collaborative marketing
 - Collaborate with producers to jointly fund an LGA wide premier food/agritourism products marketing campaign³³
 - Use the regional tourism brands or Taste Riverina to promote local produce
 - Jointly fund a marketing campaign of the region's premier food and agritourism products
 - Leverage nearby agritourism events to give a reason to stay an extra day such as Young cherry season for an excursion to Cootamundra
 - Increase local recommendations and cross promotion
 - Leverage/buy in to Thrive Riverina's collaborative marketing campaigns in Canberra market and Visit Riverina social media, email database/seasonal newsletters,

³² As per the CGRC Tourism & Economic Development Strategy 2019

³³ From the CGRC Tourism and Economic Development Strategy 2019



and media famils.

- Collaborate across regions for destination marketing campaigns
5. Integrate food and wine content and agritourism experiences into the broader destination story.
 6. Ensure agritourism experiences are listed on the Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW), TripAdvisor and Google My Business
 7. Promote the Delicious award and similar products (and where they can be bought and experienced).
 8. Leverage the Taste Riverina brand and the Riverina Food Directory website. Have representation on the Taste Committee (a Council officer or an industry

representative).

9. Leverage Tourism Australia's Restaurant Australia activities when and where relevant
10. Provide training and development in tourism promotion for Cootamundra VIC's volunteers (including famil trips to agritourism businesses).

TIMELINE:

2022 (and ongoing)

BUDGET:

\$15,000 minimum per annum (this can be part of the overall destination marketing budget)



13.11 SECURE A DESTINATION ATTRACTION AT THE GUNDAGAI OLD MILL

It is recommended that the new development that Council accepts for the Old Mill site includes an immersive experience that connects visitors to local produce and agriculture. There is opportunity for this site to link in with the Coolamon Cheese Factory and Junee Licorice & Chocolate Factory to create another iconic repurposed building that provides a quality hero tourism attraction.

DRIVER:

Council – Manager Community and Culture

PURPOSE:

Connect visitors to local produce and agriculture and local agritourism experiences

INCLUSIONS:

Some suggested uses of the site include one or a combination of the following:

- Artisan bakery using local produce
- Winery cellar door to showcase wine from the region
- Craft beverage manufacture
- Tourism facilities
- Destination dining with a focus on local produce
- Special events celebrating and promoting local produce

STEPS:

Council has made necessary updates to the building, and put out a call for EOIs for a development in the Mill. The attached product development recommendation one-pager can support pitching for a new tourism business to use this site.

13.12 DEVELOP A SPRING AND AN AUTUMN FOOD FESTIVAL

Two region-wide foodie/harvest/local produce festivals held in spring and autumn when the weather is most suitable for an event (on a long weekend where possible). An umbrella festival name will encompass a range of events run by agritourism operators, producers, community groups and others. These festivals would replace the fortnightly farmers markets.



DRIVER:

On the Road to Gundagai, GREG and CDC will lead the event development and event marketing.

Council's role is as enabler: to assist with compliance and help make it easy for events to take place, and support event promotion.

PURPOSE:

- Attract visitation
- Increase destination awareness
- Increase collaboration
- Trial new products such as short term PR collaborations (e.g. Wagga's strawberry beer collaboration between a strawberry farm and a microbrewery)

INCLUSIONS:

- Two region-wide foodie/harvest/local produce festivals³⁴
- Food produced within 100km of the region
- Elements such as tasting plates, product/wine tasting, showcases of local chefs and produce, farm tours and on farm meals

EXAMPLE:

The fast-growing [Eat Local Week](#) in the Scenic Rim attracts 40,000 people to the region and contributes more than \$2 million to the local economy (not including expenditure by locals).

ACTIVATION STEPS:

1. Bring together the main potential players to feel out interest, and flesh out the event's inclusions across the region, such as GREG, CDC, major tourism operators and existing event holders such as Cootamundra Wattle Time Fair & Street Parade
2. Engage an event expert to develop event development plans and marketing plans for each event, highlighting the governance model, budget, program, brand, etc.
3. Establish working groups for each event and determine a key coordinator to lead each event
4. Commence event planning by sending out a request for EOI's for events for the festival (Example: [Eat Local Week event application](#))

TIMELINE:

Commence planning in 2022, with the events to be launched in 2023

BUDGET:

\$40,000 to engage consultant to do event development plans and marketing plans

Seed funding of \$50,000 per event will be required with the future budget dependent on size and scale of events

³⁴ Kimo Estate is intending to develop a food and wine festival that could be leveraged for one of these

14. APPENDICES

14.1 DESKTOP RESEARCH AND CONSULTATION

In developing this report, Tilma Group reviewed the following:

- Rural Lands Issue Paper: Agricultural Tourism 2018, Cootamundra–Gundagai Regional Council
- Tourism and Economic Development Strategy 2019, Cootamundra–Gundagai Regional Council
- Community Strategic Plan 2018, Cootamundra–Gundagai Regional Council
- Brand Strategy Cootamundra, Gundagai & Villages presentation
- Boosting Regional Australia Through Agritourism Discussion Paper 2018, Australian Regional Tourism
- Agritourism – An industry skills gap scoping study, Box Hill Institute
- Riverina Murray Destination Management Plan 2018
- The Riverina Strategic Plan 2020, Thrive Riverina
- Starting and running an agritourism business, Farmers' experiences and needs 2019, Service NSW for Business
- An inquiry into the development of agritourism survey results snapshots 2020, Australian Regional Tourism
- NSW Food and Wine Tourism Strategy 2018, Destination NSW
- Food and Wine Tourism in New South Wales 2015, Tourism Research Australia
- Food Tourism to NSW 2018, Destination NSW
- Wine Tourism to NSW 2018, Destination NSW
- Riverina Research Key Insights (target market research), Destination NSW
- Gundagai Visitor Information Centre recent visitor statistics
- Local Government Area Profile 2018 for Cootamundra Gundagai, Tourism Research Australia
- Regional NSW Visitor Profile 2019, Destination NSW
- Community Donations Policy 2020, Cootamundra–Gundagai Regional Council
- Business Connect Agritourism webinar with Regionality
- Scenic Rim Locavore Program

An audit of agritourism and tourism experiences was developed via desktop research.

Consultation was conducted by Tilma Group with the following stakeholders:

- Mayor Abb McAlister, Tourism and Economic Development Officer Jeana Bell, Manager Community and Culture Miriam Crane, Manager of Development, Building & Compliance Sharon Langman, and Tourism Administration Trainee Casey Polsen, Cootamundra–Gundagai Regional Council
- Members of the Gundagai Tourism Action Committee and Cootamundra Tourism Action Group
- David Ferguson, Kimo Estate
- Rachel Whiting, RDA Riverina
- Arcadia Addams, Small Business Commission

- Richie Robinson, Destination Riverina Murray
- Brent Lawrence, Thrive Riverina
- Leah Sutherland and Gwen Norman, Cootamundra Development Corporation
- Louise Freckelton, Highfield Farm and Woodland
- Rose de Belin, Planted Cootamundra
- Annie Jacobs, Wallendbeen Park Farm
- Jamie, Rusty Table
- Nina Piotrowicz
- Ali Betts, formerly of Muddy Pigs
- Kerenza Brown, Southern Harvest
- Miriam Hewson Destination Marketing Officer, Snowy Valleys Council
- Melanie Whitechurch, Tourism and Events Manager, Hilltops Council
- Fiona Hamilton Visitor Economy & Events Coordinator, Wagga Wagga City Council and tourism staff
- Craig Sinclair Economic Development Manager, Temora Shire Council

Additionally, an online survey was distributed to Cootamundra–Gundagai producers and agritourism operators and the wider community via Coota Local and Gundagai Local and direct mail with 14 responses.

Due to COVID-19 travel restrictions no site visits were undertaken by Tilma Group.

14.2 HOW LOCAL GOVERNMENT CAN SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH OF AGRITOURISM BUSINESSES

This report by Service NSW for Business explores the experience of farmers in NSW who are trying to start, run and grow agritourism businesses, and provides insights into their pain points and how to resolve them: [Starting and running an agritourism business; Farmers' experiences and needs.](#)

14.3 FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRIORITY PROJECTS

Agritourism industry group [Northern Rivers Food](#) secured [\\$240,000 over three years](#) from a State MP (their previous Lower House Member, now in the Upper House). The MP's staff member advises that Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council or an agritourism industry group should approach the region's state and federal members of parliament and the State Minister for Tourism to ask how the region can work with government to secure financial support for agritourism development.

Grant opportunities for each project requiring funding include the following:

Project	Grant Name	Description	Who can apply	Rounds
1.8 Implement the Agritourism Business Development Program	FRRR Strengthening Rural Communities	Supports organisational capacity building	Not-for-profit, community-based organisation	4/year
	FRRR Tackling Tough Times Together	Supports projects with one of these aims: 1. Building community resilience 2. Developing organisational resilience and capacity 3. Enhancing environmental sustainability 4. Fostering cultural vibrancy 5. Lifelong learning and education 6. Economic strength 7. Improving community health and social wellbeing	Community groups and not-for-profit organisations in drought-affected regions	Always open

1.12 Develop a spring and an autumn food festival	Building Better Regions Fund	Up to \$20,000 unmatched (or double budget) for new or expanded events	Not-for-profit organisations and Councils	1/year (November)
	FRRR Strengthening Rural Communities	A broad range of charitable projects are considered under this program, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivering, or providing activities, events, programs and services; • Purchasing or hiring equipment and materials; • Community infrastructure projects; • Organisational capacity building; • Community resource development. 	Not-for-profit, community-based organisation	4/year
	Destination NSW Regional Event Fund	It is not clear if DNSW will support new events in the future as they did in the past.	Not-for-profit organisations	

Grants do not typically fund destination marketing projects, such as

- 1.4 Create agritourism brand story
- 1.5 Bundle products into itineraries and a map
- 1.6 Hire a PR agency
- 1.10 Invest in strategic marketing

However, it may be possible to secure funding from drought or bushfire related grants for destination marketing activities.

