



# GLOBAL FOOD AND LAND USE TRANSITIONS



## Strengthening and diversifying rural and regional livelihoods

GLOBAL FOOD AND LAND USE TRANSITIONS

While over 70 per cent of Australia’s population live in major cities<sup>1</sup>, the vast majority of our land mass is populated and managed by rural and regional communities. The transition to sustainable food and land use presents an enormous opportunity to develop stronger, more diverse and more resilient rural and regional livelihoods. Each of the transitions can and must support this.

### AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT

**Economic diversification aligned with sustainable future pathways presents opportunities to strengthen rural and regional communities**

- Agriculture<sup>2</sup> and mining<sup>3</sup> underpin many rural and regional economies, but regional economies have become increasingly diverse over time<sup>4</sup>. Maintaining and boosting this diversification can offset the risks inherent in relying on key industries<sup>5</sup>.
- Options for diversification that align with sustainable pathways may include sustainable agriculture and aquaculture, natural capital management and carbon farming, value adding for primary agricultural products, food innovations e.g. insect protein, development of indigenous food industries, food, cultural heritage and eco-tourism, supply of renewable energy and co-located low emissions energy-intensive manufacturing.

**Capturing these economic diversification opportunities requires improved social and physical infrastructure, and access to services**

- Regional areas experience lower social and economic outcomes, especially in relation to formal education, incomes<sup>6</sup>, and health<sup>7</sup>. Suicide rates are particularly high in regional areas, up to double the rates of cities<sup>8</sup>. These issues can contribute to high levels of migration to cities, especially amongst younger people<sup>9</sup>.
- Physical infrastructure and social services in rural and regional areas are often inadequate, especially in health, education, childcare, transport, financial services<sup>10</sup>, aged care and digital services<sup>11</sup>. Regional infrastructure and communities are increasingly at risk from climate impacts, including more frequent and severe fires, heatwaves, water availability, droughts and floods.
- The disruptions caused by COVID-19 may lead to increased interest in rural and regional living, putting additional strain on infrastructure<sup>12</sup> but also presenting an opportunity for revitalisation and diversification.



<sup>1</sup> ‘Major cities’ are classified as having a population of 100,000 or more.

## CURRENT STATE OF PLAY

Key action areas<sup>ii</sup> for supporting diversification of rural and regional livelihoods include:

- **SUPPORT AND STIMULATE DIVERSIFIED RURAL AND REGIONAL ECONOMIES**, particularly diversification into opportunities aligned with sustainability.
- **INVEST IN SOCIAL AND PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES**, especially in health, education, childcare, transport<sup>13</sup> and digital services<sup>14</sup>.

- **STRENGTHEN RURAL AND REGIONAL COMMUNITY RESILIENCE**

through provision of risk management tools, well-designed financial and other assistance mechanisms and climate resilient infrastructure and planning.

The table below outlines the current state-of-play for each action area, including major current and proposed initiatives.

KEY ACTION AREA	PROGRESS TO DATE
SUPPORT AND STIMULATE DIVERSIFIED RURAL AND REGIONAL ECONOMIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A range of initiatives have been introduced or are under consideration for growing regional opportunities in sustainable agriculture, natural capital management and carbon farming (see the <a href="#">Scaling Productive and Regenerative Agriculture</a> paper).</li> <li>● Food manufacturing is Australia’s largest manufacturing sub-sector representing \$102b in turnover, nearly 1/3 of all manufacturing<sup>15</sup>. Food innovation and value adding could boost regional employment<sup>16</sup>, but requires additional investment in research and development<sup>17</sup>.</li> <li>● The declining cost of solar and wind energy provide regional Australia with an opportunity to produce large-scale renewable energy, and Farmers for Climate Action have proposed a Regional Energy Transition Program to accelerate this transition<sup>18</sup>.</li> <li>● With the rollout of large-scale renewables, Australia can become a leader in low-emissions energy-intensive manufacturing<sup>19</sup>, presenting additional opportunities for regional areas<sup>20</sup>.</li> <li>● A range of tourism opportunities exist in regional areas, including agritourism, eco-tourism and conservation volunteering, and tourism focused on nature, renewable energy, adventure, cultural sites, and food and wine<sup>21</sup>. Additional support opportunities could include business development support, training in regional areas, investment in arts, sports, and cultural activities that attract people to regional areas, and development and maintenance of essential infrastructure<sup>22</sup>. Australian Regional Tourism has proposed the development of a national strategy and associated policies for agritourism<sup>23</sup>.</li> </ul>

CONT. 

ii Based on the Growing Better report.

KEY ACTION AREA	PROGRESS TO DATE
<p>INVEST IN SOCIAL AND PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The 2017 'Regions 2030' national plan outlines Federal government expenditure for a range of regionally-focused initiatives across five areas: jobs and economic development, infrastructure, health, education, and communications<sup>24</sup>.</li> <li>● The Regional Australia Ministerial Taskforce has been established to 'spearhead' the government's approach across the five areas of the Regions 2030 plan. Taskforce membership includes the prime minister, and ministers from across a range of federal government portfolios<sup>25</sup>.</li> <li>● The 2018 Select Committee on Regional Development and Decentralisation identified 'the perception of regions as "second rate,"' and the ongoing trend of people moving to the state capitals as the key barriers to regional development<sup>26</sup>, and laid out a far-reaching work program of 'strategic ... investments that build workforce and leadership capacity, cultural capital and infrastructure to support and attract jobs'<sup>27</sup>.</li> </ul>
<p>STRENGTHEN REGIONAL AND RURAL COMMUNITY RESILIENCE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A range of government initiatives provide financial support for farmers affected by drought and other extreme events, some of which also encourage actions that improve resilience to future events.</li> <li>● Despite facing some of the greatest weather-related challenges of any developed farming economy, a range of barriers mean most Australian farmers cannot access or have not taken up crop insurance<sup>28</sup> or drought insurance<sup>29</sup>, while multi-peril insurance has 'failed to thrive'<sup>30</sup>.</li> <li>● The National Drought Response, Resilience and Preparedness Plan supports farmers and rural communities prepare for and manage through drought, and includes a \$3.9 billion Future Drought Fund<sup>31</sup>.</li> <li>● National Agriculture Ministers have committed to develop a national strategy for climate and agriculture<sup>32</sup>, including climate adaptation considerations.</li> </ul>



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## FOR MORE INFORMATION

The Land Use Futures program is working to adapt the global transitions to reflect Australia’s unique national and regional circumstances, and identify key actions to accelerate the transition. This paper is the first step in that process.

Find out more about Land Use Futures by visiting our website: [www.climateworksaustralia.org/project/land-use-futures](http://www.climateworksaustralia.org/project/land-use-futures)

The Land Use Futures program is led by ClimateWorks Australia (working within the Monash Sustainable Development Institute), Deakin University and CSIRO.

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