

POLICY DOCUMENTS



Agriculture and food security

Victoria is on the verge of a new era in agriculture, and the Victorian Coalition Government's vision to double Victoria's food and fibre production by 2030 sets the scene for exciting opportunities ahead for our farmers, agribusinesses and regional communities.

By 2030 Asia's consumer class population is expected to increase six-fold from 525 million in 2009 to 3.5 billion. By this time it is expected that Asia will represent two-thirds of the global consumer class. As incomes increase, diets will expand to include more proteins such as dairy, meat, and grain.

The Coalition Government's *Food to Asia Action Plan* is integral to ensuring that Victoria, as the nation's leading exporter of food and fibre, is well positioned to capitalise on the opportunities that this transformative period brings. By improving access to Asian markets, creating new markets for premium products and working to improve freight efficiencies, Victoria's *Food to Asia Action Plan* will give food producers market options never seen before.

Victoria's record \$9.4 billion of agricultural exports achieved in 2012-13 are poised to grow even further, bolstered by the Coalition Government's hard work in successfully creating new industries, new opportunities and improving market access.

Our achievements since 2010 and our positive, strategic vision for agriculture's future reinforce the Victorian Coalition Government's strong leadership and commitment to a \$12.5 billion industry that supports 60,000 jobs across our state.

Achievements and policies implemented

- Delivered \$35.4 million for the *Food to Asia Action Plan* which aims to put more Victorian food and beverages on Asian tables. The Action Plan is complementary to *Growing Food and Fibre* – a \$61.4 million initiative that is

increasing productivity through targeted research and development that can help to meet the growing demand from Asia.

- Increased levels of international engagement, so far leading 310 food and beverage businesses on Super Trade Missions to the Middle East, South East Asia and China to create and strengthen export partnerships.
- Opened the world-class Australian Grains Genebank in Horsham which will store a national collection of more than 180,000 pulse, cereal, oilseed and tropical seed samples from Australia and around the world.
- Invested \$18.8 million in dairy research, development and extension, matched by \$15.7 million from industry sources including Dairy Australia and the Dairy Futures Cooperative Research Centre. Part of this funding falls under a new historic \$40 million, five-year partnership between Victoria and Dairy Australia for targeted, applied research aimed at lifting dairy productivity and international competitiveness.
- Invested in a new animal research house at the Hamilton Red Meat Innovation Centre to study sheep and lambs and their growth responses to different feeds and forages.
- Boosted service delivery to regional areas through the newly merged Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI).
- Provided crucial support to the fruit industry through the \$22 million in financial assistance to SPC Ardmona, a \$2 million Fruit Industry Employment program to help growers affected by SPC Ardmona's decision to cut fruit intake and creation of the Goulbourn Valley Fruit Growing Industry Road Map.
- Fought to better control foxes and wild dogs, reintroducing the Fox and Wild Dog Bounty that pays \$10 for shot foxes and \$100 for wild dogs. More than 270,000 fox scalps and 1,300 wild dog pelts have been handed in to the fox and wild dog bounty during its first two years. Ground baiting, aerial baiting, trapping and easier 1080 access are further measures being implemented to control these destructive pests.
- Established a niche, hand-harvested commercial scallop fishery in Port Phillip Bay.
- Passed legislation and set up comprehensive regulatory framework to enable the cultivation of alkaloid poppies in Victoria, an opportunity potentially worth up to \$100 million to growers in the next decade.
- Started a trial to allow the use of kangaroo meat arising from authorised wildlife control activities, assisting farmers with disposal after control efforts and creating new commercial opportunities.
- Created new projects to support the adoption of electronic sheep and goat identification.
- Established a new Women in Primary Industries Roundtable to discuss emerging issues, trends and opportunities within the agriculture industry.
- Continued the partnership between the Victorian Government and the Victorian Shellfish Hatchery for another three years.
- Improved safety around logging with new on-the-spot fines introduced for protestors who illegally enter operational logging coupes, to protect their safety and the safety of workers.
- Issued new licences for timber harvesting in Mount Cole State Forest which now supports a local sawmill, two new commercial firewood businesses and

supply feed stock for a state-of-the-art bioenergy plant that heats Beaufort Hospital.

- Provided funding for a careers adviser position at the Victorian Farmers Federation to promote agricultural career opportunities in schools.
- Responded to concerns in the grape industry about the impact of smoke taint on long term viability. The Centre for Smoke Taint Research at Mildura is researching the differences in uptake of smoke taint compounds at different stages of the crop growth cycle and by different grape varieties.
- Stocked a record 8 million native fish over the past four years to improve freshwater fishing opportunities for anglers and provided \$16 million in funding for the Recreational Fishing Initiative.
- Established a new independent Game Management Authority.
- Ended confusion and legislated to make it clear that local councils are responsible for roadside pest and weed control. Funding provided to rural and regional councils to assist in meeting these responsibilities.

Animal Welfare

Animal welfare is the responsibility of everyone involved with animals, including breeders, pet shops and owners. The community has strong expectations about the care of animals, and laws must reflect the high value society puts on animal welfare.

The Victorian Coalition Government has taken many steps to make animal welfare a priority and to ensure tough measures are in place for those who breach animal welfare laws.

Achievements and policies implemented

Dramatic improvements to animal welfare led by the Coalition Government include:

- an updated Code of Practice for the Operation of Breeding and Rearing Businesses for dogs and cats, delivering on our promise to crack down on rogue and illegal puppy farms by introducing the toughest laws in the world.

For the first time, the new Code makes the following mandatory:

- a clear ban on wire floor cages;
- minimum of 30 minutes of exercise twice per day for non-working dogs;
- mandatory minimum staff to animal ratios;
- health management plans which must be signed off by a Veterinarian;
- male dogs must be retired from breeding at six years of age, unless certified as healthy for continued breeding by a veterinarian;
- maximum of five litters for female dogs, unless a Veterinarian provides an Annual Breeding Clearance certificate for each individual animal;
- socialisation requirements;
- annual health checks for all dogs;

- expanded vaccination schedule;
- separate whelping and lactating facilities;
- euthanasia by barbiturate overdose administered by a Vet;
- an explicit ban on the use of blunt force trauma for euthanasia;
- new nutritional plan requirements; and
- extra record keeping to ensure traceability.

The old code, which the previous Labor Government refused to update:

- had no veterinary check requirements;
 - had no staff ratios;
 - required only 10 minutes of exercise twice per day; and
 - had no retirement provisions at all for either male or female dogs.
- increased fines and potential confiscation of assets and profits from illegal puppy farms. Owners of puppy farms that aren't registered or don't comply with the mandatory code of practice now face fines of more than \$35,000 for individuals, \$86,000 for businesses, confiscation of property and animals, and a ban on owning, working or even volunteering with animals for up to 10 years.
 - an updated Code of Practice for Pounds and Shelters to remove the 28-day rule so unclaimed dogs and cats do not have to be put down after 28 days. The revised code also recognises the role of volunteer foster carers assisting shelters and pounds to improve re-homing rates.
 - greater powers to the RSPCA to enter and inspect puppy farm premises supported by funding of \$1 million a year.
 - creating the \$1.6 million Animal Welfare Fund.
 - establishing the Victorian Animal Welfare Advisory Committee.