

FOOD FOR ALL

INTRODUCTION

Food is a necessity and a [fundamental human right](#) and one of life's great pleasures.

Food shapes cultures, tradition, customs and beliefs. It brings us together and is essential to community, cultural expression, health and happiness.

We want to create a society where everyone has access to healthy, affordable, locally grown and sustainably produced food.

We also want to ensure that Canberrans have access to and control over the food they eat, so they can be confident that what they eat is healthy, environmentally sustainable and ethically produced.

WHY DO WE NEED TO INVEST IN URBAN AGRICULTURE?

The current system of food production, consumption and waste is unsustainable, insecure and economically unjust.

The globalisation and corporatisation of food production has created an industrial food system that rewards cheap, low quality and environmentally unsustainable food.

This imperative has come at massive cost to our environment, to our nutrition, to the welfare of animals, to our ecosystems and to our community resilience.

Globally, we're seeing monoculture crops fail in a changing climate, the desertification of huge swathes of formerly fertile land, and the loss of precious ecosystems due to the ever growing demands of industrial agriculture and urban sprawl.

Meanwhile, the COVID-19 pandemic has seen more Australians than ever [turning to their own backyards as a source of food](#), while highlighting the [insecurity in our food system](#). While [Australia produces enough food to feed our population, ensuring that everyone has access has been shown to be a challenge](#).

The [UN Food and Agriculture Organisation findings from a review of urban food security](#) across the world are clear that in order to cope with shocks such as COVID-19, cities should adopt policies and programs to empower local producers to grow food, and promote short food chains, to diversify their food supplies and food sources, reinforcing local sources where possible.

ACT community led initiatives like food-cooperatives, the Ainslie, City and Inner North urban farms, seed savers groups, Capital Scraps composting and the Lyneham and Downer forests have started up from the grassroots, with limited government support. We've also seen the huge impact and popularity of community garden grants, together showing the community support for these kinds of programs. At the same time industry is gathering momentum to invest heavily in urban agriculture. The vertical farm at Ginninderry being run by students from Kingsford Smith Highschool and the Food in the Capital conference both demonstrate the potential for large social and economic windfalls from comparably small start-up investments.

For Canberra to truly be a [world leading sustainable city](#), we need an urban food strategy that supports backyard, community and larger scale urban agriculture.

Locally produced, sustainable urban agriculture is at the forefront of the global sustainable city movement. Places like [Seattle](#), [Toronto](#), the [Netherlands](#) and [Barcelona](#) are leading the way, proving that cities and densely populated peri-urban regions can still produce high quality, more sustainable food, and guarantee food security in the face of increasingly uncertain global supply chains. This is clear research on the [policy levers needed](#) to drive urban food systems. Crucially there needs to be a coordinated approach that **integrates food as a nexus point between other renewable energy, recycled water, and organic composting soil remediation initiatives.**

However, urban agriculture in Australia has not received the focus or support it needs to properly flourish. The Greens are [repairing ACT land](#) and [waterways](#), now we need to focus on our food system.

THAT'S WHY THE ACT GREENS WILL LEAD CANBERRA TO BECOME AUSTRALIA'S FIRST AND LEADING FOOD GARDEN CITY, TO BUILD RESILIENT, SUSTAINABLE, LOCAL FOOD PRODUCTION, BY:

1. Prioritising **local food resilience**
 - a. Developing an **ACT Food Security Strategy**
 - b. Convening a **community led forum about local food sovereignty** to inform the Food Security Strategy
 - c. Including the **right to food in the Human Rights Act**
2. Cultivating our local, large scale urban food production capacity
 - a. **Investing \$3 million to grow the ACT agriculture industry through:**
 - i. **\$1.5 million** for Regional Development Australia (ACT region) to establish a **Canberra Region Food Collaborative** to provide a **coordinated and integrated centre for food innovation in the ACT**
 - ii. **\$1.5 million grant and no-interest loan fund to support local ACT region commercial farmers and food producers**
 - b. Piloting an **intensive urban agriculture pilot project**
 - c. Support **direct partnerships between our food producers, with use of CBR branding and labelling for local ACT region food and investigate minimum targets for Canberra region food in procurement**
 - d. **Converting land from Broadacre zoning to Rural zoning to protect productive farmland in the ACT, including in the Majura Valley, from development pressures.**
3. Fostering **community led food production**
 - a. Recognising the value and legitimacy of **community and household food production in our regulatory systems**
 - i. Reviewing **regulations about community and household food production including greywater harvesting**
 - ii. Facilitating access **to the means of food production for all residents including tenants and social housing tenants**
 - Through **mandated space for community gardens in all new suburbs, and retrofitting into existing suburbs where possible**
 - Through **continued refinement of verge and street gardening policy**
 - Creating a presumption that landlords will **permit renters to grow food in their backyard or balcony** on the same basis as recent changes to allow pets in tenancies
 - Allowing **public housing tenants to establish community / personal garden patches and composting facilities on public housing grounds.**

- iii. Creating a program of **Community Food Production facilities**, including **substantially expanding the public land available for community food production**
- b. Establishing a **\$1.5 million Community Food Fund** for community gardens, orchards, in school food education, garden therapies, food box schemes, foraging groups, markets, food swaps and sharing economies, programs to support low income households to establish gardens, seed saving and permaculture initiatives
- c. Establishing **\$500,000 'Larders not Lawns' fund** to encourage and support residents and leaseholders on low incomes to replace grass lawns with food gardens
- d. Developing the **ACT's first street orchard program**, for neighbourhoods who want them
- e. Allowing people to plant **edible fruit and nut trees on nature strips**
- f. Supporting **pollinators and bees**.

1. PRIORITISING LOCAL FOOD RESILIENCE

A. DEVELOPING AN ACT FOOD SECURITY STRATEGY

The Greens believe that it is vital that the ACT has a clear strategy for our city's food security. COVID has shown how our reliance on industrially produced, and imported foods leave us vulnerable. We know that in a changing climate there will be more pressure than ever on our local environment and our food and water supplies.

While we are privileged to live in a relatively affluent society, we cannot become complacent that we will always be able to buy the foods we need. For a resilient, self-sufficient and secure community, we need to plan now for food security and our food sovereignty.

The Greens want a community co-designed Food Security Strategy that builds on the [Food in the ACT](#) study and the [ACT Region Food Policy and Food Plan](#) discussion paper. The Food Security Strategy will map out the challenges and opportunities for Canberra's food future until the middle century. This Strategy should prioritise:

- the intrinsic right of everyone to equally access, grow and choose their food
- the fundamental need for food to be produced in a way that regenerates the environment, improving its ecological health into the future
- recognition of limits to growth and consumption within ecological and ethical boundaries
- the value of First Nations knowledge and customs about sustainable food production and land management
- the value of a diversity of approaches, perspectives and integrated systems

- a food system built on connectedness, relationships, solidarity, inclusive participation and decision making
- a food system aligned with natural systems and circular economy principles where waste is a renewable resource that is converted into useful inputs
- a food system that builds food banks and food resilience into our response to climate change and disaster preparedness
- a food system that is holistically managed and not reductive in addressing problems, but instead examines processes outcomes
- protecting remaining high value soil and water resources
- maintaining productive land within the ACT and providing tenure security for producers that are actively producing.

The Greens want the **Strategy to be developed by 2022, with review every five years and are committing \$640,000** over four years to develop the strategy and convene a community led forum on food sovereignty.

B. CONVENING A COMMUNITY LED FORUM ABOUT LOCAL FOOD PRODUCTION TO INFORM THE FOOD SECURITY STRATEGY

To support the co-design of the ACT Food Security Strategy, the Greens would convene a community led forum about local food production to determine how our community wants to grow a fair food system. Food is inherently a social issue and the more voices that can shape decision making will increase the strength and effectiveness of our policy choices.

The Greens will convene the forum by the end of the 2021 financial year.

C. INCLUDE THE RIGHT TO FOOD IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

The Greens want the right to access affordable, appropriate food recognised in the Human Rights Act. This recognition would provide more emphasis on the fundamentally important nature of food to our society and set out our aspirations to ensure that everyone in Canberra has equitable access to healthy and nutritious food.

This would not mean that the Government has to provide every person with food but instead mean that Government decisions, policies and programs must not restrict people's right to access adequate food. These policies and decisions would be tested on their impact on food availability, affordability and adequacy. For example the right to food would be supported by policies limiting the use of pesticides known to disrupt insect pollinator populations, or by point of sale labelling that lets people know what is in their food and how it has been produced. This would give Canberrans a better ability to advocate for their own ability to produce, distribute and choose their food.

2. CULTIVATING OUR LOCAL, LARGE SCALE URBAN FOOD PRODUCTION CAPACITY

A. INVESTING \$3 MILLION TO GROW THE ACT AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY THROUGH:

I. **\$1.5 MILLION FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUSTRALIA (ACT REGION) TO ESTABLISH A CANBERRA REGION FOOD COLLABORATIVE TO PROVIDE A COORDINATED AND INTEGRATED CENTRE FOR FOOD INNOVATION IN THE ACT**

II. **\$1.5 MILLION GRANT AND NO-INTEREST LOAN FUND TO SUPPORT LOCAL ACT REGION COMMERCIAL FARMERS AND FOOD PRODUCERS THAT SUPPLY CANBERRA**

Regional Development Australia (ACT region) has pioneered ACT work on industry/government partnerships at the nexus of renewable energy and regenerative agriculture through the [ACT and Regions Agrifood Hub](#). An investment of \$1.5 million over three years will enable them to build on their industry links to drive a food collaborative for the capital. The Greens believe that we also need to value our local farmers, with a \$1.5 seed investment and no-interest loan fund, especially when following the drought, they have provided the community with access to fresh, nutrient-dense food throughout the pandemic

This proposal will:

- Establish Canberra as one of Australia's and the world's leaders in urban/region sustainable food production and urban liveability
- Help the ACT Government, community and industry identify and pursue the optimal path to achieving food sustainability best suited to local conditions and community
- Create a unique regional approach around sustainable food across the food value chain for supply to Canberra and for export, backed by education and skills
- Provide a boost to the ACT's (re)investment proposition reflecting strong investor sentiment with more innovative sustainable food businesses
- Support local provenance and food sourcing into the restaurants, tourism and hospitality industry

B. PILOTING AN INTENSIVE URBAN AGRICULTURE PILOT PROJECT

The Greens want to scope and pilot an intensive urban agriculture project to determine how to best encourage large scale urban food production. [Globally it is estimated that urban agriculture produces 15 to 20 percent of the world's food supply.](#) While this is mostly in developing countries, there is potential for more food security in reimagining our unused public spaces and facilities as food production spaces.

[Key barriers in cities have been space, inefficiency and cost, but with more focus and technological advances in high yielding and low space farming, it would be possible to grow more food where we live.](#) Canberra has the benefit of large amounts of open public space that are not heavily used and does not have high conservation values which could usefully be converted into intensive farming operations, subject to local community agreement. [There is research that shows that urban agriculture can produce higher yields than conventional agriculture but with more inputs in terms of energy and labour. However, in an economy with a higher use of renewable energy, the embodied energy in producing those yields is decreased.](#) This means that in a city like Canberra that is leading the way in transitioning to net zero emissions, and developing smarter systems for circular waste recovery of organics, urban agriculture may make more sense. Local food production also means local oversight can ensure production methods are sustainable and ethical.

In addition urban agriculture provides the potential for ongoing jobs in an industry that builds community resilience and esteem. The Greens have committed **\$400,000 for a pilot to deliver an intensive urban agriculture project to be rolled out in 2023.**

C. SUPPORT DIRECT PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN OUR FOOD PRODUCERS, WITH USE OF CBR BRANDING AND LABELLING FOR LOCAL FOOD AND INVESTIGATE MINIMUM TARGETS FOR CANBERRA REGION FOOD IN PROCUREMENT

The Greens believe that more can be done to foster partnerships between government agencies providing food and local farmers and producers. The Greens want a concerted push to use CBR branding on local, sustainably produced food. The Greens will investigate minimum targets for procurement and sourcing of produce from the Canberra region through purchasing contracts for Government institutions, whether hospitals, schools or detention facilities.

D. CONVERTING LAND FROM BROADACRE ZONING TO RURAL ZONING TO PROTECT PRODUCTIVE FARMLAND IN THE ACT FROM DEVELOPMENT PRESSURES

The Greens also want the Government to convert productive and fertile farmland in the broadacre zone to the agriculture-focussed Rural Zone, including in the Majura Valley, to

protect this land from development for industrial or commercial uses. The Greens are [concerned about urban development - particularly around our larger cities like Sydney](#) and Melbourne - encroaching on our food bowls and setting up an unsustainable reliance on long transport food miles. The Greens will draw on work to develop [roadmaps for resilient city food bowls](#) to make sure that we protect land in the ACT, like Majura Valley, that has high quality soil and water resources.

The Greens want to set and meet a land development target of **[80 percent infill/ 20 percent greenfield policy to protect productive farmland in the ACT](#)**. This will need to be undertaken in close consultation with rural leaseholders. The Greens will also provide tenure security for actively producing leaseholders in these areas.

3. FOSTERING COMMUNITY LED FOOD PRODUCTION

A. RECOGNISING THE VALUE AND LEGITIMACY OF COMMUNITY AND HOUSEHOLD FOOD PRODUCTION IN OUR REGULATORY SYSTEMS

The Greens want a fundamental recognition of the value and legitimacy of community and household food production in our regulatory systems.

From the time pre-white colonisation where [First Nations peoples firestick farmed](#) in the Canberra region, through to the first tenant market gardeners through to the victory gardens where individual households supported the war effort, Canberra has a proud history of producing local food.

The Greens want to recognise the right of individuals, families and communities to grow food. This means enshrining that right in our planning, building and development systems, and in our residential tenancies and public housing laws by making changes where appropriate to facilitate community and household food productions, including commercial food production. This would include:

I. REVIEWING REGULATIONS ABOUT COMMUNITY AND HOUSEHOLD FOOD PRODUCTION INCLUDING GREYWATER HARVESTING

The Greens will review regulations that impact on community and household food production to ensure that our systems promote rather than hamper urban food production.

Community and household food production can be covered by a large number of regulatory systems including plumbing, planning and building rules. While there have been substantial changes made to the planning system to remove unnecessary barriers to community gardens, the Greens understand that more work is needed in other areas of regulation.

For example, the Greens want to encourage people to be capturing and using rainwater and greywater to irrigate their gardens, grow food and create microclimates and ecosystems that support our native animals. While we have mandated rainwater tanks, there is still [greywater going to waste when it could be captured, stored and used within the landscape](#). The Greens believe that change to require all new builds to come pre-plumbed for external greywater use, [as implemented in San Diego](#), could give homeowners the ability to better reuse this resource and save money. Smarter use of our precious water resources is essential as we transition to a warming climate. More storage of water in soil and permeable surfaces means less runoff and pollution of our waterways, and an increased resilience to droughts and the urban heat island effect.

II. FACILITATING ACCESS TO THE MEANS OF FOOD PRODUCTION FOR ALL RESIDENTS INCLUDING TENANTS AND SOCIAL HOUSING TENANTS

The Greens want system wide change to support [renter's rights](#) and ensure that all Canberrans, regardless of income or their living situation, have access to space to grow food. This means that we need a radical shift to supporting access to space to grow food whether:

- Through **mandated space for community gardens in all new suburbs** as part of future developments, and **retrofitting into existing suburbs where possible**
- Through continued refinement of verge and street gardening policy
- Creating a presumption that landlords will **permit renters to grow food in their backyard or balcony** on the same basis as [recent changes to allow pets and minor property modifications in rentals](#).
- Allowing **public housing tenants to establish community / personal garden patches and composting facilities on public housing grounds**.

III. CREATING A PROGRAM OF COMMUNITY FOOD PRODUCTION FACILITIES, INCLUDING SUBSTANTIALLY EXPANDING THE PUBLIC LAND AVAILABLE FOR COMMUNITY FOOD PRODUCTION

The Greens want a dedicated Food Access Team in City Services to administer a consolidated register of spaces where people can grow food in the community and a Community Food Production facilities program to identify and allocate land and buildings for community food production use. Land on the register would be checked for constraints like environmental values, heritage values and contamination to give community groups certainty that it is suitable for food production.

There are already [ACT community garden guidelines](#) but the Greens believe that there should be a presumption that where a community organisation identifies a piece of suitable unleased land they would like to use for food production, the Government should support that space to be made available, by:

- Ensuring that it is not an onerous application process
- Organising community consultation so that it is not an unachievable burden
- Providing regulatory assistance, and public liability insurance cover for groups to establish gardens
- Permitting use of the site if groups can do so safely and take on responsibility for managing the site, and
- Creating a system for mediation of disputes in cases of conflict with other public land users, public amenity or government functions.

The Greens will fund 3 staff to facilitate community urban food production.

This will support the Greens plan to develop the [ACT's first street orchard programs, for neighbourhoods who want them and allowing people to plant edible fruit and nut trees on nature strips](#).

B. ESTABLISHING A \$1.5 MILLION COMMUNITY FOOD FUND FOR COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE, COMMUNITY GARDENS, ORCHARDS, IN SCHOOL FOOD EDUCATION, GARDEN THERAPIES, FOOD BOX SCHEMES, FORAGING GROUPS, FOOD SWAPS AND SHARING ECONOMIES, SEED SAVING AND PERMACULTURE INITIATIVES

The Greens will establish a \$1.5 million Community Food fund to encourage local, grassroots initiatives to build locally resilient and connected food systems. This fund would be made available to support community groups with costs of establishing, rolling out and maintaining projects such as community supported agriculture, community gardens, orchards, in school food education, garden therapies, food box schemes, foraging groups, food swaps and sharing economies, seed saving and permaculture initiatives.

An open, inclusive fund of this nature supports the idea that local people should be engaged in the production of their food and in the decision making about how to govern their food systems.

C. ESTABLISHING \$500,000 'LARDERS NOT LAWNS' FUND TO SUPPORT HOUSEHOLDS WITH FINANCIAL BARRIERS WHO WANT TO REPLACE GRASS LAWNS WITH FOOD GARDENS

In addition to a fund for Community Food production, the Greens will establish a \$500,000 'Larders not Lawns' fund to support residents to replace low-diversity grass lawns with bio-diverse food gardens.

We recognise that healthy food is often out of the financial reach of people for some people. The Greens believe that equitable access to healthy, nutritious food is essential in a progressive, inclusive and resilient society. So we want to support people on low incomes to be able to grow their own food if they wish. We know that home gardening has [beneficial impacts on health and wellbeing](#) as well as neighbourhood connectedness and the ecological health of our urban environment. Transforming lawns into abundant food larders will strengthen household resilience and self-sufficiency and provide vital urban habitat for our pollinators and bees.

D. SUPPORTING POLLINATORS AND BEES

The Greens have a strong plan to build the [ecological resilience of our urban environment](#). This includes creating pollination corridors by planting bird- and pollinator- attracting plants across the urban environment. We will also better support our vital pollinators by:

- ensuring that government urban tree and shrub planting lists include flowering seasons, to ensure year-round nectar availability for bees and birds; and
- banning the use of "neonicotinoids" (a type of pesticide that harms bees) in Government land management, and to reduce other impacts - reducing the use of glyphosate and other pesticides wherever possible.