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## SUBMISSION TO METROPOLITAN STRATEGY REVIEW

The Australian City Farms & Community Gardens Network appreciates the opportunity to make a submission to the Metropolitan Strategy. Our submission is made in the belief that the Strategy should firmly address the sustainability of Sydney's regional food system and the further development of opportunities within the associated regional food economy.

The Network was alarmed to see that, under the original Metropolitan Strategy, Sydney faced the potential loss of around 50 percent of its market gardens, an outcome that would have severely limited the potential of the city's regional food economy and the employment and access to fresh food that is part of it.

The recent drought, the recent irrigation crisis in the Murray-Darling Basin and the CSIRO's finding that regions west of the Great Divide are likely to become drier while the NSW coastal plain retains much of its moisture in a climate change scenario, firmly underline the need to retain a regional fresh food production and distribution capacity in the Sydney metropolitan area.

According to researchers, Sydney Basin farming is productive and efficient. It is a major industry in western Sydney and is a pathway into Australian life for many immigrants. This provides the industry with a social rationale in addition to its economic and nutritional roles and, consequently, makes it a valid topic for addressing within the Metropolitan Strategy.

Following is a set of recommendations the Network makes for the Metropolitan Strategy.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The state government **commission a comprehensive land capability study of the Sydney periurban region** to identify prime and marginal agricultural land. State planning laws then be amended to preserve in perpetuity for farming, land identified as prime agricultural. Land identified as agriculturally marginal be made available for urban and other development.
2. A **policy of accommodating the expected 6 million population** of Sydney by 2036 be adopted that further develops the present trend towards medium density living; that this policy include arrangements by which large areas of multiple-use public open space be provided in easy access to areas designated for medium density development and that, within this open space, planning laws and regulations set aside land designated for the option of community food production in community food gardens, small scale commercial market gardens, aquaponic systems of combined vegetable and fish production and for the direct marketing to the public of farm produce via farmers' markets, community-based buyers groups, food co-operatives and similar enterprises.
3. Local government work with state government, food education and advocacy organisations, small business and social enterprise food distributors, farming interests, researchers and industry to **develop complementary policy on food security** that includes the addressing of health, food distribution, regional economies, access to food and food retail and new opportunities in food production, distribution and waste processing.
4. State government collaborate with small business and social enterprise to **create further opportunities within the regional food system** by making available long term, interest-free loans as start-up capital to small for/not-for-profit enterprises; and that locally owned social business (small businesses having social goals and addressing social issues as their primary motivation) be favoured in the allocation of start-up capital loans.
5. Write into planning instruments at the state government level and work with local government to write into their planning documents **the opportunity for the further development of community food gardens** as centres of food production to supplement household food purchases and as social and learning venues.
6. In periods of water shortage, **allocate through regulation a higher water allowance to organisations and individuals growing food** in home and community gardens. Because water at this scale of production is better targeted to crops, a reduction in water consumption used to grow crops is achieved (Australia's agriculture uses around 70 percent of the nation's fresh water resource).
7. **Introduce anti-monopoly legislation** to provide economic security for small, independent food-related business in suburban shopping zones so as to prevent unfair competition from supermarkets and the subsidiaries of big food retail corporations.

8. Develop a plan to **increase the social status of Sydney region farmers and their training** in organic and other sustainable systems of food production so as to attract a younger cohort to farming as a career.
9. Develop a **plan to train Sydney region farmers** in farming systems that are less reliant on the use of synthetic chemical inputs so as to take advantage of new markets for such produce. Include in the plan training in food marketing, linking with urban eaters through new food distribution systems such as Community Supported Agriculture ventures and in emerging opportunities in primary production such as agritourism and specialised cropping.

Thank you for this opportunity to make a submission to the Metropolitan Strategy Review.

Yours sincerely,

Russ Grayson

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