

Integrated Food Policy in Australia: Anthony Sherry, Executive Director, Food and Beverages, Regional Development Victoria

Globally, food is one of the most debated topics of our time – how it's produced, who produces it, where it comes from and what it contains. There is increasing media coverage of food-related issues including climate change restricting production, increasing prices, competition for resources from other sectors, food production and processing methods, food security, and the obesity epidemic in a growing number of developed countries. There is strong community interest in the challenges to our food system and increasing demand for new food solutions.

The Government recognises the importance of the food system to the Victorian economy and communities, and to the health of Victorians and the environment. It is important for these reasons that there is integrated and coordinated action on food.

A Victorian Food Strategy was announced in June 2010 by the Premier and the Minister for Regional and Rural Development, as part of *Ready for Tomorrow: A Blueprint for Regional and Rural Victoria* - the Government's \$631 million plan for a prosperous and sustainable regional and rural Victoria.

Funding of \$500,000 has been allocated to develop the Food Strategy, which will be overseen by a high-level Inter-Departmental Committee chaired by Regional Development Victoria. All departments involved in food are represented on the Committee.

Victoria's Food Strategy will have the following vision and key themes:

Vision:

There is a future for food that is better for all Victorians – for a healthy economy, healthy community and healthy environment.

Themes:

- 1) Victoria's food businesses are competitive in domestic and international markets
- 2) Victorians are healthier and obesity and diet-related disease are declining
- 3) Victoria's food system is safe, secure, sustainable and resilient
- 4) Victoria has a vibrant food culture and connected communities.

The Strategy aims to:

- Improve coordination and collaboration between different areas of government and with stakeholders
- Increase collective knowledge to better understand the complex interactions of different parts of the food system

- Facilitate collaborative action to tackle current and future challenges and to capture opportunities.

The lead Minister for Food, Jacinta Allan, will be consulting with stakeholders from across the food system during August and September 2010 to seek input into the development of the Strategy. Representatives from agriculture, food processing and manufacturing, health and nutrition, sustainable land management, planning, food retail, food service, tourism, transport, skills and community development will be consulted.

The Victorian Food Strategy is due to be released in 2011.