

**The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP**  
Minister for Agriculture  
Minister for Regional Development  
**AGRICULTURE PORTFOLIO**

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

30 June 2021



## State of the sector

Despite the challenges of the past year, in 2020-21 agriculture has highlighted its role a central pillar of Victoria's economy and regional communities



**\$17.8 billion**

gross value of agriculture production in 2019-20



**84,500 jobs**

in agricultural production



**21,700**

agricultural business



**11.3 M ha**

of productive land used



**28%**

of total national food and fibre exports in 2019-20

## Our achievements

# We implemented a range of programs to provide much needed support to seasonal harvests

### Seasonal Workforce Program

We have provided \$36 million in assistance to help address seasonal workforce shortages brought on by COVID-19 pandemic

**2400**

Local job seekers accessing the Seasonal Harvest Sign-on Bonus, with over 900 approved for the second payment

**850**

Agriculture seasonal workers from the Pacific supported to enter Victoria

**13**

Locally-led projects to supply COVID-19 safe accommodation through the Seasonal Worker Accommodation Program

**2300**

Stakeholders engaged with by Seasonal Workforce Coordinators, including over 1000 jobseekers and direct calls to almost 900 business

## Our achievements

# We celebrated, protected and invested in the innovative potential of the Victorian agricultural sector

### Small-scale and Craft Program

**\$4.1 million** worth of grants to help 165 small-scale and craft agribusinesses to expand and diversify

### Agrilinks

**\$20 million** to support rural, regional and interface councils to upgrade local road linkages that support the agri-food sector

### Native foods and botanical

**\$2 million** in Djakitjuk Djanga grants to 13 recipients to support Aboriginal leadership and participation in Victoria's native food and botanicals industry

### SmartFarms

Supported continued agricultural research and innovation through the opening of new SmartFarms in Tatura, Ellinbank and Mildura

### On-farm IoT trial

**\$6.4 million** in grants to 354 farmers to support adoption of internet-enabled technologies

### Biosecurity

Responded to biosecurity challenges, including achieving freedom from Avian Influenza, and addressing Khapra Beetle and AVG outbreaks



## Our achievements

# We invested in the forestry and game industries to prepare them for future growth

### Forestry

- **\$11.2 million** to support timber salvage harvesting operations
- \$2 million was allocated to establish the Gippsland Centre of the National Institute for Forest Products Innovation - First round of proposals closed 14 May 2021
- Released the \$4 million Local Development Strategy grants program. Work on the Orbost local development strategy is underway
- Four business transition plans are complete, 19 are in progress and three applications are being processed under the \$1.1 million Forestry Business Transition Voucher Program

## Our achievements

### Forestry (Cont.)

- **9** applications received under the first round of the Timber Innovation Grants Program
- **\$110 million** Gippsland Plantations Investment Program was released to market and **500 hectares** of crown land plantings
- Victorian Forestry Plan engagement - **960** community and stakeholder interactions

### Game

- Launched the Traditional Owner Game Management Strategy
- Progressed the Government's commitment to move toward adaptive harvest management
- Commenced development of the second Sustainable Hunting Action Plan (SHAP 2)

## This Budget – key initiatives

# We are helping farmers assure the quality of their produce globally through modern ‘product to plate’ traceability systems

## Transforming traceability systems - \$11.7 million

*We are working with to enhance Victoria’s reputation for safe and high-quality food and fibre products*

Funding will support the agri-food sector to design, test and adopt modern traceability technologies and systems, including:

<b>Traceability information hub</b>	To upskill industry by providing access to knowledge and connections
<b>Research</b>	Developing smart traceability design and innovation
<b>Pilots of key technologies</b>	Enabling the adoption of traceability technology and systems
<b>Awareness raising programs</b>	Marketing ‘paddock to plate’ traceability of Victorian produce to overseas consumers
<b>Modernising of regulations</b>	Developing Australian and Victorian traceability standards

This work will provide direct benefits to the industry by growing both local and export market access and job creation.

## This Budget – key initiatives

# We are strengthening the resilience of Victoria's agriculture sector in response to a changing climate

## Agriculture and climate change - \$20.0 million

*We will deliver on our commitment to position Victoria as a leader in low-emissions agriculture*



Development of a Victorian Agriculture and Climate Change Statement with industry, setting a long-term vision for agriculture's role in a net-zero emissions economy

**\$0.6 million**



Investment into research, innovation and deployment of emissions reduction technologies and practices, including trials of methane-inhibiting feed additives

**\$3.9 million**



Investment to provide information, tools and services to support adaptation and climate risk management across the agriculture sector

**\$15.4 million**

**This Budget – key initiatives**

## **We are continuing to invest in agricultural communities**

**Victoria's Fruit Fly  
Strategy - \$6.4 million**

**Victorian Rural Women's  
Network - \$1.4 million**

**Rural Financial Counselling  
Service - \$5.8 million**



**This Budget – key initiatives**

**We are delivering a range of forest management services to support implementation of the Victorian Forestry Plan**

**Victorian Forestry Plan implementation – \$24 million over two years**

- New funding to support continued protections for Leadbeater possum habitat
- New funding for bushfire management support, road maintenance and the provision of forest data services