



AUSTRALIAN FOOD SOVEREIGNTY ALLIANCE

From Paddock to Plate, Locally and Globally

House of Representatives
Joint Standing Committee on Trade and Investment Growth

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We thank the Federal Government for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Paddock to Plate discussion paper. In addition to providing a written submission, we welcome further opportunities to participate in development and implementation of plans and policies to strengthen rural economies. We hope the Government will facilitate robust and meaningful stakeholder engagement across all aspects of the agricultural and food sector, prioritising the voices of First Peoples and small-scale farmers, both rights holders under UNDRIP and UNDROP, and those with lived experience within our food system.

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About the Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance

The Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance (AFSA) is a farmer- and First-Peoples-led civil society organisation working for socially just and ecologically sound food and farming systems. We centre the voices of First Peoples, small-scale food producers, and local communities in decision making.

AFSA connects small-scale producers for farmer-to-farmer knowledge sharing, advocates for fair access to local markets and infrastructure, and pushes for scale-appropriate regulation at all levels of government.

We are part of a strong global food sovereignty movement through our membership in La Vía Campesina, Urgenci, and the IPC for Food Sovereignty, and we support the Australasian delegate to the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism at the UN.

Our vision is for agroecology-oriented farms to thrive, producing nutritious food through short, fair supply chains that protect human and planetary health. This includes recognising and promoting First Peoples' knowledges and custodianship of Country, and committing to decolonial futures for food and agriculture.

Executive summary

Our submission draws from AFSA's *People's Food Plan* (PFP), a democratic alternative to the 2013 National Food Plan, and sets out pathways for a truly 'clean and green' food system that is not export-oriented but ecologically regenerative, socially just, and locally controlled.

Improving domestic and international marketing to promote Australia's 'clean and green' food and agriculture sectors

While the phrase 'clean and green' evokes Australia's natural advantages, it risks becoming mere branding if not matched by genuine ecological integrity, transparency, and justice throughout supply chains. AFSA urges the government to move beyond marketing rhetoric and invest in **authentic clean and green systems**, grounded in agroecology, regenerative practices, and democratic governance.

Recommendations

Adopt national agroecology and regenerative agriculture frameworks that set clear criteria for soil health, biodiversity, water stewardship, and low-carbon food systems.

Recognise First Peoples' right to relate to Country by providing unfettered access to Country - starting with all public lands. Governments must:

- Remove land-use regulations that restrict First Peoples' access to public lands;
- Enact legislation to ensure First Peoples have access to cultural food provisioning practices on Country;
- Develop a Traditional Knowledge Code of Practice in consultation with Indigenous communities to require benefit-sharing negotiations;

Embed First Peoples' food, land, fire and economic management practices in all Indigenous Land Use Agreements and National Parks, above and beyond Native Title determinations;

Increase funding and training opportunities for First Peoples rangers and custodians to care for Country; and

Include First Peoples' input through culturally-appropriate engagement practices in the development of land and water resource management and planning.

Promote transparency by supporting direct, short supply chains that allow eaters to know where and how food is produced.

Champion small-scale producers who embody ecological and ethical production — the real drivers of a credible 'clean and green' reputation.

Replace export-centric narratives with fair, reciprocal, and ecologically sound trade relationships that respect farmers' rights and regional self-sufficiency.

Support State Governments to amend planning legislation around food processing infrastructure, particularly micro and mobile abattoirs to reduce food miles and promote ecological benefits of pastured livestock.

Promoting and supporting rural and regional small and medium businesses through branding, labelling, and certification

Current branding and certification systems often privilege industrial-scale operations and impose disproportionate costs on small-scale producers. AFSA supports approaches that **decentralise and democratise certification**, enabling local and regional food economies to flourish.

Recommendations

Fund and recognise participatory guarantee systems (PGS) as legitimate and cost-effective alternatives to third-party certification, empowering local networks to ensure transparency and trust.

Support regional branding initiatives that reflect unique bioregional food identities — connecting soil, story, and community.

Streamline labelling regulation for direct and small-scale sellers to reduce red tape while maintaining consumer confidence.

Aligning tourism with food and drink experiences in rural and regional Australia

Food and agri-tourism can be tools for re-localising food economies, supporting farmers, and deepening public understanding of sustainable food systems. However, they must not reproduce extractive models of tourism that commodify culture or landscape, and they must not replace farming as the primary land use in the agricultural zones.

Recommendations

Support on-farm tourism infrastructure — such as farm stays, workshops, and open days — led by small and family farms that practice agroecology and regenerative agriculture. Support should come in the form of both small grants and legislative reform so long as the agri-tourism is ancillary to the farming activities.

Develop regional food trails highlighting agroecological farms, artisanal processors, and First Peoples' food and land stewardship.

Embed food sovereignty education in tourism promotion — showcasing Australia's genuine diversity of food cultures, including Indigenous, migrant, and smallholder traditions.

Link tourism funding to biodiversity and cultural outcomes, ensuring that food experiences support, rather than erode, local ecologies and communities.

Conclusion

To sustain the integrity of Australia's 'clean and green' identity, we must look beyond marketing to **structural transformation** of how food is grown, shared, and governed. By embedding food sovereignty, agroecology, and fair local economies at the heart of agricultural promotion, Australia can present a model of genuine sustainability to the world — one that nourishes people, communities, and the land itself.