

Media Release

The Hon Jaclyn Symes MLC

Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Minister for Regional Development

Minister for Agriculture

Minister for Resources



Friday, 20 November 2020

BACKING AGRICULTURE FOR VICTORIA'S STRONG FUTURE

The Andrews Labor Government is backing a stronger, more innovative and sustainable agriculture industry with a new strategy to drive Victoria's recovery from coronavirus and bolster the economy.

Minister for Agriculture Jaclyn Symes today announced the *Victorian Budget 2020/21* will provide \$65 million to support a strategy that responds to the challenges facing our farmers and positions Victorian agriculture for future growth.

A key focus of the strategy will be the modernisation of Victorian agriculture. This includes \$15 million to access leading AgTech, innovative farming methods and new skills so farmers have the tools and expertise they need to deliver more high-quality products to more local and global consumers, and enjoy even better returns.

Help for our farmers to expand their export potential will be provided through \$20 million for the *Food to Market* and *Pathways to Export* programs, which will support infrastructure and business development projects and dedicated agriculture export resources for Victorian farmers.

The strategy will also focus on protecting the future of the industry by helping farmers respond and adapt to climate change. Underpinning these objectives is a \$30 million investment to extend the *Agriculture Energy Investment Plan*, which helps farmers reduce their energy costs, and be more energy efficient and productive.

The Plan has been extremely popular, with farmers across Victoria benefitting from more than \$11 million in grants awarded this year for energy efficiency investments and own-generation technology.

This Government is continuing to support the industry as it recovers from the coronavirus pandemic, drought and bushfires. Through the strategy, farmers and businesses will be helped to build resilience and take advantage of opportunities to strengthen supply chains and local manufacturing.

The strategy will build on existing work including Victoria's world-class agricultural research capacity, the On-Farm Internet of Things trials, new SmartFarms and Small-Scale and Craft Program.

The Government will work in partnership with industry to ensure this work aligns with their future plans, building on the regular engagement with our industry reference group since March. There will be opportunities for everyone to share their views and details on how to do this will be available soon.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Agriculture Jaclyn Symes

"Farmers have always been resilient – we want to equip them with the tools where they can think beyond coping with the current challenges, to set themselves and the broader industry up for a vibrant future."

"With these recent challenges come real opportunities to do things differently and give Victorian farmers a competitive advantage. This strategy will help drive recovery and ensure our world-class agriculture sector emerges stronger –so it can continue to be the heartland of Australian food and fibre."