

Media Release

Ms Mary-Anne Thomas MP
Minister for Regional Development
Minister for Agriculture



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AGRICULTURE EDUCATION TAKES A VIRTUAL LEAP ON FARM

The Victorian Government is supporting agriculture within the school curriculum, inspiring the next generation of farmers with a new interactive online tool.

Minister for Agriculture Mary-Anne Thomas today met virtually with students and industry professionals to launch the Melbourne Foodbowl Virtual Farm – a new educational and interactive tool connecting farmers with students.

The digital resource will help students understand the key role farmers play in land management and biodiversity while also showing them the many career opportunities the agriculture industry has to offer.

The Virtual Farm came to life through the six-month Farms2Schools program which was delivered by the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority.

The funding was part of the Victorian Government's commitment of \$8.39 million toward job creation and skills development under the *Agriculture Workforce Plan*. Part of the funding has been distributed across eight Catchment Management Authorities throughout the state for targeted projects that benefit agriculture.

Originally designed as a face-to-face program, Farms2Schools pivoted from excursions to online classes due to coronavirus restrictions.

Farmers and industry professionals broadcast into classrooms, teaching students from across Melbourne about a range of topics including dairy, chickens and livestock, grains, vineyards, vegetables, nurseries, conservation and landcare.

The Farms2Schools project has delivered 240 sessions to almost 10,000 students, highlighting how farmers are at the centre of Melbourne's foodbowl and strive every day to produce sustainable products that support a growing community.

The Virtual Farm can now bring these lessons to more students by supporting teachers with plans, activities and resources that align with the Victorian curriculum across a range of year levels.

As outlined in the recently released *Agriculture Strategy*, the Victorian Government is working to position agriculture as a career of choice for the next generation of students.

To explore the Melbourne Foodbowl Virtual Farm, visit virtualfarm.melbournefoodbowl.com.au.

Quote attributable to Minister for Agriculture Mary-Anne Thomas

"We are supporting our next generation of young farmers to learn about the vast and rewarding opportunities that the industry has to offer – reinforcing agriculture as a career of choice."

Quote attributable to Port Phillip and Western Catchment Management Authority CEO David Buntine

"We are proud to have designed and delivered Farms2Schools, and now the Melbourne Foodbowl Virtual Farm, which has brought farmers and students together to learn about farming, land management and biodiversity."

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