



**CITY OF WANNEROO**  
Agribusiness Position Paper

# **A THRIVING AGRI-PRECINCT IN WANNEROO**

**Agri-precinct Objective:**

Celebrate and recharge our history to create a vibrant, competitive and innovative agri-food sector within the broader North Perth Food Zone that supports substantial employment for our growing community

# CONTEXT

The City of Wanneroo (the City) is part of a regional agricultural ecosystem that stretches north along the Turquoise Coast through the Wheatbelt region. It is collectively referred to as the North of Perth Food Zone. Wanneroo is the southern point of this \$1 billion per annum regional food zone producing over 60 agricultural products, playing a vital role in both the food production chain and a critical linkage to local suburban markets. This region is integral to Perth and WA's future food security, providing an important source of high quality, healthy, local produce for Perth's growing urban population and potential export markets.

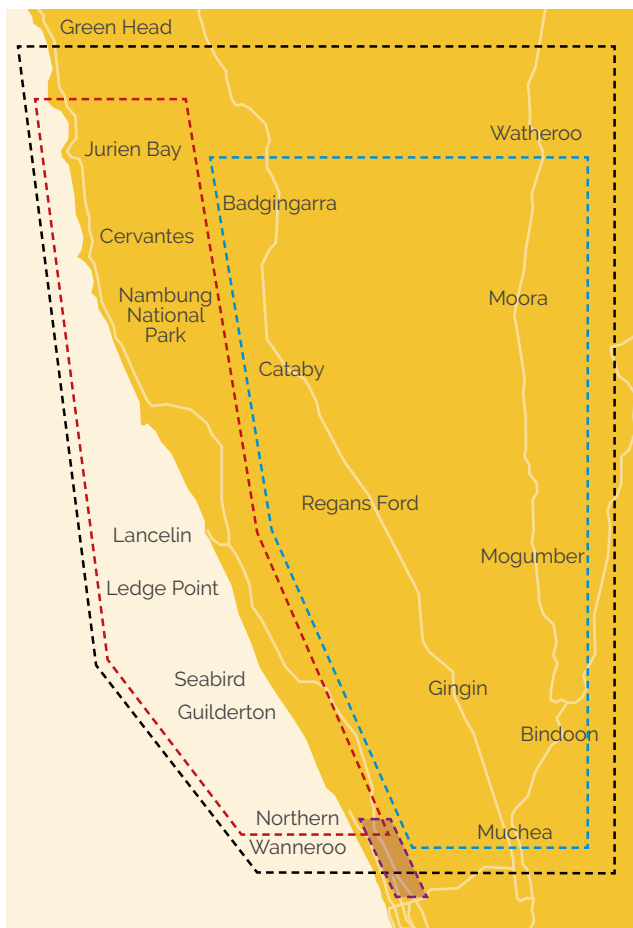
Perth's expansion and escalating population are placing ever-increasing pressure on agricultural land in the City due to urban encroachment. It is accepted that some land traditionally used for agricultural production across the City, particularly in East Wanneroo, has and will continue to be urbanised over the longer term. The Future of East Wanneroo (WAPC, 2007) recommended that productive agricultural land lost to urbanisation in East Wanneroo be replaced through the expansion of the existing agri-precinct in North Wanneroo.

The North Wanneroo agricultural precinct, including Carabooda and Nowergup has been identified by both the City and the State Government as being strategically significant with both indicating their intention to keep

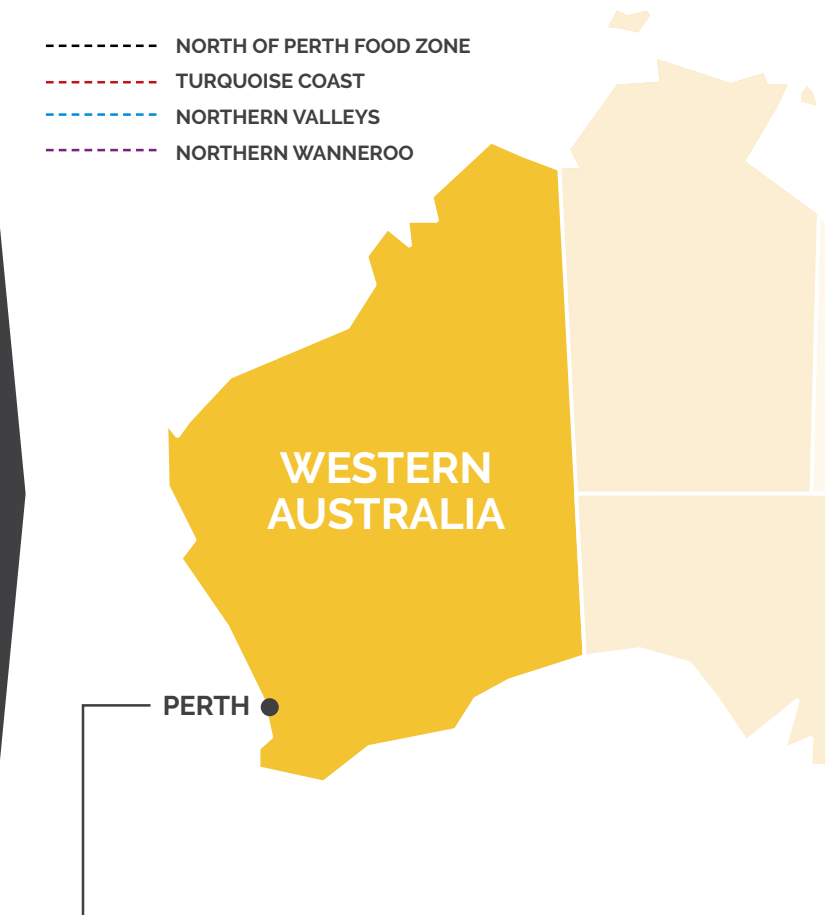
this precinct for agricultural production by retaining the existing rural zoning and not supporting residential sub-division in this precinct. Expansion of agriculture in the City is being investigated by the State Government for a new leasehold precinct in State Forest 65 using recycled water.

Water is the major limiting factor for agribusinesses in the City and in a drying climate; water security is becoming an increasingly important problem. In response to the issues being faced, the State Government created a taskforce to address water allocation and land use issues in North Wanneroo by bringing together key government and industry stakeholders. The Taskforce delivered its recommendations to the Hon. Alannah MacTiernan, MLA Minister for Agriculture and Food 16 August 2018. Minister MacTiernan responded to the Taskforce report on behalf of the State Government on 30 January 2019 announcing a proposed 10 percent reduction to water allocations in North Wanneroo from 2028.

There is wide concern for the impact this proposed reduction will have on profitability, productivity and viability of agribusinesses in Wanneroo when coupled with the need to expend resources to improve water use efficiency, rising input costs and stagnant prices for produce.



- NORTH OF PERTH FOOD ZONE
- - - - - TURQUOISE COAST
- - - - - NORTHERN VALLEYS
- - - - - NORTHERN WANNEROO



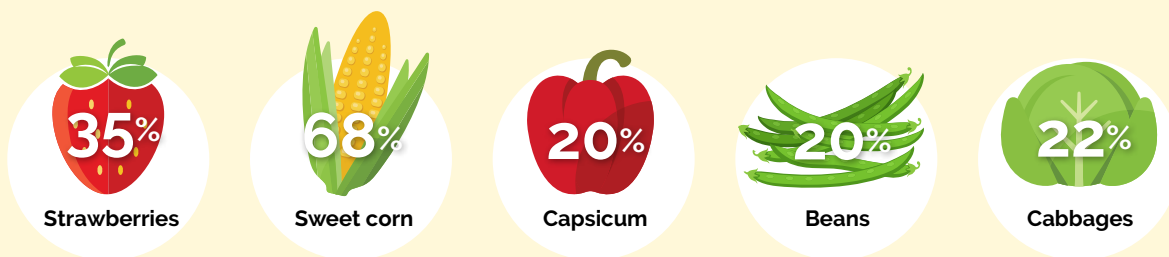
# WANNEROO

Wanneroo has played a significant role in food production since the Whadjuk and Yued people followed the seasons. Since settlement, Wanneroo has been a food bowl for Perth and for travellers to the north, with agricultural activities an integral part of the area's cultural history.

In 2017/18, agriculture in the City contributed \$327.71m Output/Total Sales and 1,040 total jobs (National Institute of Economic and Industry Research, 2018).

The City contributes 34% of the total Gross Value of Agricultural Commodities produced in the Perth region (ABS, Agricultural Census, 2015-2016). The City's agri-supply is strategically significant to both Perth and Western Australia.

**The region produces and/or processes 17.5% of West Australia's total vegetable production. Production includes:**



**of the State's total production, ABS, Agricultural Census, 2015-2016**

## WHY WANNEROO – THE OPPORTUNITIES

Historically, Wanneroo offered the existence of relatively good quality Spearwood soils, low transport costs and travel time, availability of labour, groundwater and temperate weather patterns which encouraged settlement and establishment of the current agri-industry. Other strengths and opportunities include:

- Multi-generational knowledge, land ownership resulting in low land costs for agricultural development;
- Implementing improved water use practices;
- Access to large tracts of potential agricultural land including State Forest 65;
- Proximity of industrial development areas and potential supply chain linkages including Neerabup Industrial Area, Muchea Industrial Park and the metro food supply chain;
- Possible new sources of water available;
- Use of processed urban waste for fertilisers and soil improvements;
- Access to food precincts north of Perth;
- Ready access to population and labour;
- Growing population to support agriculture-based tourism, education and other recreational activities;
- Planned new road alignments such as Northlink;
- Existing zoning and ongoing strategic identification of the area as rural is likely to have attracted limited speculation in respect to urbanisation;
- Presence and interest in tourism activities;
- Increased interest in local food provenance and local branding;
- Role of the City in research and development, opportunity to be a peri-urban 'test bed' for the agricultural industry with access to universities and research bodies; and
- Increasing local, national and global demand for food, particularly food grown using high health and environmental standards.



## WHAT'S IN OUR WAY – THE CHALLENGES

A hotter, dryer climate has reduced both natural rainfall and available groundwater for agriculture in Wanneroo. Availability of water including short and long-term water security is the most significant constraint and challenge facing the area at present. Other constraints and challenges include:

- Land size/availability;
- Expansion/growth potential;
- Workforce development to ensure local skills align with locally available job opportunities;
- Provision of adequate core infrastructure such as telecommunications infrastructure;
- Access to supply chain;
- Land use certainty and speculation regarding non-agricultural rural uses such as rural residential;
- Political support and public investment;
- Viability of assets;
- Reliance of industry on low value, price taking commodities with limited value adding or niche products grown and/or processed in the area;
- Potential land use conflict including the impacts of spray drift, noise, dust and odour;
- Wetlands;
- Bush forever areas;
- Bush fire prone areas;
- Presence of karst;
- The existence of basic raw materials;
- Long term mining of basic raw materials;
- Generational change, with low incentive for the next generation to continue farming; and
- Inefficient and outdated irrigation delivery systems.

## CONSEQUENCES OF NON-DELIVERY

The consequences for the City and State of Wanneroo ceasing to be a significant agricultural area include:

- Loss of economic activity, economic diversity, jobs and future economic growth;
- Loss of viable agricultural lands;
- Food security threat with an increasing reliance on imported food;
- Affordability and quality of produce could be negatively impacted;
- Loss of historical and cultural value; and
- Loss of tourism opportunities.

# CURRENT PROJECT STATUS

The main projects currently being undertaken at a State and Local Government level relevant to addressing the issues affecting agriculture in the City include:

- **Taskforce** - In response to the Taskforce report the McGowan Government's current projects include:
  - A business case for a new agri-precinct in State Forest 65 using recycled wastewater from Alkimos Wastewater Treatment Plant; and
  - Water efficiency audits have been completed on 22 irrigators in North Wanneroo in late 2019 coordinated by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) who will present the results and recommendations from these audits to the industry in 2020.
- **Water** - No date has been confirmed by the Department of Water and Environmental regulation (DWER) to release the draft Gnamptara Groundwater Area Allocation Plan for public comment. The draft plan is expected to include the State Government's proposed 10% reduction to groundwater allocations for North Wanneroo growers.
- **Consultation** - The City has completed extensive stakeholder consultation to inform and finalise this position paper, along with administering and hosting regular collaborative meetings with

government departments; DPIRD and DWER. The City is supportive of initiatives to increase water use efficiency and has supported a water and nutrient benchmarking project in partnership with Perth Region NRM being undertaken with irrigators in North Wanneroo. The City has also collaborated with local agri-tourism businesses, neighbouring LGA the Shire of Chittering and Tourism WA to develop and promote the Eat Pick Grow agri-tourism trail.

- **Planning** - projects related to North Wanneroo include:
  - Recommendations relating to land use and zoning received during the public consultation period will be considered in the City's preparation of its Local Planning strategy. This will be prepared concurrently with the new Local Planning Scheme 3. Both documents are anticipated to be presented to Council for adoption as drafts in mid-2021; and
  - The draft East Wanneroo District Structure Plan was released by the Western Australian Planning Commission (WAPC) for public comment in late 2019. Submissions closed 20 December 2019 and the Structure Plan is expected to be finalised in late 2020.

## MOVING FORWARD

Consultation has confirmed that there is shared ambition from stakeholders and Government on several key areas; the valuable contribution the agricultural industry makes to the local and regional economies, recognition of the importance of retaining this industry in the City of Wanneroo, removal of key barriers to the expansion of agriculture in Wanneroo (available water supplies and agricultural land), for all stakeholders to use water responsibly and make improvements to water use efficiency.

Following are the key initiatives required to address the identified challenges and leverage opportunities in North Wanneroo.

### Key Stakeholders:

Industry stakeholders must be an active part of the solution and help set the direction of the area for the future.

- **Stakeholder alliance** - the industry would benefit significantly from coordinated activity amongst stakeholders including tourism operators. This alliance could provide recommendations to Government, explore opportunities for a regional food brand and facilitate and advocate for funding; and
- **Business development for the industry of the future** - with support from the State and Local Government an opportunity exists for further development of water use efficiency practices, innovative farming techniques, value-adding, agri-tourism, study tours, exemplar projects, local in residences, research grants and research and development.



## State & Federal Government Initiatives:

The State & Federal Governments can reduce uncertainty and reduce or remove barriers to expansion which will provide the Industry with the confidence to invest in Wanneroo long term.

- **Leadership** - strong leadership is required if Perth's foodbowl is to be preserved for current and future generations with a clear State-wide plan developed to achieve this;
- **Water Security** - reduce grower uncertainty about long term water supplies. A clear and long term plan for water supplies for agriculture in Wanneroo including access to sustainable groundwater and the development of new climate independent water supplies to augment sustainable groundwater supplies and accommodate industry expansion.  
  
Options to investigate include but are not limited to:
  - Recycled wastewater from Alkimos Wastewater Treatment Plant;
  - Managed Aquifer Recharge; and
  - Excess water from the urbanisation of East Wanneroo;
- **Collaboration** - work with stakeholders to develop innovative project proposals that respond to the identified challenges (including the impacts of climate change), develop programs that will assist horticulturalists to adopt new infrastructure and practices to improve water, nutrient and energy use efficiency;
- **Industry Support** - leverage funding from the Australian Government to support agreed projects and ensure that the industry has access to Commonwealth Government's funding for on-farm irrigation water efficiency projects which is currently only provided to irrigators in the eastern states;
- **Planning** - work with stakeholders to agree and confirm the long term land use expectations for urban agricultural areas and develop key messages which all levels of government can use consistently in response to the agreed land use expectations; and
- **Taskforce Recommendations** - continue to action key recommendations from the Taskforce Report including recommendation A1: Assess the capacity of the industry to adapt to a reduction in water allocation and remain profitable.

## City Led Initiatives:

The City acknowledges that the Gnangara groundwater system is over-allocated and continuing to over-use the system will further reduce groundwater levels, reduce water quality and damage the groundwater dependent environment. However the City would like to work with State Government and other stakeholders to find a long term solution and see any reduction in groundwater licences in North Wanneroo supplemented with an affordable climate independent water supply.

- **Water Security** - water security in Wanneroo depends on continued access to sustainable groundwater and the development of new climate independent water supplies to augment sustainable groundwater supplies. The City will continue to work with State Government and other stakeholders to achieve long term water security for agricultural use including investigation of the feasibility and suitability of excess water from urbanisation in East Wanneroo being used as an alternative water supply;
- **Smart Land Uses** - the City's current preparation of its Local Planning Strategy and the new Local Planning Scheme 3 will include a detailed review of land uses and zoning in North Wanneroo including investigation of alternative zones and land uses such as tourism related zones or uses and appropriate subdivision. The review aims to provide adequate flexibility for business development while minimising conflict between food production and other land uses. It will provide clear guidelines for administration and council to make decisions on discretionary uses in rural zones to allow consistent decision making;
- **Partnership Building** - strengthen and build on current regional partnerships and collaboration efforts including industry stakeholders and organisations, the North of Perth Food Zone, Wheatbelt Development Commission and government departments;
- **Advocacy** - continue to advocate for local agribusinesses in line with the City's endorsed documents; and
- **Agri-tourism** - explore agri-tourism linkages and opportunities through development and promotion of the current industry and encouragement of new agri-tourism experiences, value add and niche products.