



Southern Forests Carbon Strategy

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Version 1.2

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Introduction

The Southern Forests Food Council (SFFC) is a pivotal organisation dedicated to promoting sustainable agricultural practices and fostering a thriving community in the Southern Forests region. Comprised of local farmers, producers, and community leaders, the SFFC works collaboratively to enhance the quality and sustainability of food production in the area. The Southern Forests region is renowned for its world-class produce, playing a vital role in the economic and social fabric of the Manjimup Shire, the Western Australian State, and Australia as a whole.

The SFFC represents local producers who live and work in what is Western Australia's premier food bowl, aiming to ultimately establish the Southern Forests as an internationally recognised food-producing region. The SFFC acts as a single point of direct contact for over 100 growers and indirectly the entire region, producing over 50 different types of fruits and vegetables, beef, sheep, dairy, pork, wine, and gourmet products, including truffle. This array of produce is unified under one regional brand, Genuinely Southern Forests Western Australia.

A central initiative of the SFFC is our Carbon Strategy and is designed to assist efforts to reduce carbon emissions and promote sustainability across multiple sectors of our region. From 2024 to 2025, with the support of key regional, state, and federal stakeholders, the SFFC aims to be recognised as a leader in assisting the region in its carbon reduction efforts, sharing our knowledge and practices both nationally and internationally to help and learn from others. To achieve this, we will form strategic alliances with regional producers, the Manjimup Shire, the Western Australian State Government, and the Federal Government as well as the wholesalers and retailers in the supply chain. These partnerships will be crucial in securing funding and advancing our carbon strategy, ensuring widespread impact and long-term success.

Impact on Farming Communities

The Southern Forests region of Western Australia is a world-class producer of premium fruits, vegetables, wines, and livestock. Located in the beautiful South West corner of the state, this area boasts exceptional soil quality and a climate that enables the cultivation of over 50 different types of fruits and vegetables. The region is renowned for its significant contributions to Western Australia's agricultural production, including 70% of the avocados and 50% of the apples. With its pristine growing environment and commitment to quality, the Southern Forests region has established itself as one of Australia's premier food bowls. The close-knit community of farmers and producers takes immense pride in delivering nationally and internationally recognised products, from world-class truffles and wines to premium meats and dairy. This dedication to excellence has helped position the Southern Forests as an internationally recognised gourmet food region and culinary tourism destination.

However, without the support and resources to take a more aggressive approach to carbon reduction, the Southern Forests region faces significant risks. Proactive measures are essential not only for mitigating these risks but also for enhancing the resilience and sustainability of our farming methods. Addressing climate change presents a great opportunity to innovate and improve farming practices, leading to long-term economic stability and environmental health. The community impact is profound, as sustainable farming can ensure continued employment, preserve local traditions, and maintain the high quality of life in the region. Moreover, the mental health of our farmers is intricately linked to their ability to manage and adapt to climate-related challenges. Economic uncertainties and the stress of unpredictable weather patterns can take a toll, making it imperative to support our farmers through robust carbon reduction strategies and innovative solutions.

The results of a 2023 Farmers for Climate Action survey of Australian agricultural perspectives on a path to net zero clearly demonstrate that Australian farming communities recognise the impacts of climate change. 92% of farmers who responded to the survey have experienced changes in seasonal conditions and climate-related on-farm impacts in the past three years, including:

- Unusual rainfall experienced by 64% of farmers
- Unpredictable growing seasons experienced by 53% of farmers
- Flooding experienced by 47% of farmers
- Drought experienced by 39% of farmers
- Increases in pests and diseases experienced by 22% of farmers
- Bushfires experienced by 18% of farmers

89% of the farmers surveyed described climate-related on-farm impacts events as ‘very unusual’ or ‘somewhat unusual’

55% of farmers identified climate change as the greatest threat to the future of farming in Australia – almost four times as many as the next most popular response, increasing bureaucracy and red tape (15%)

They also demonstrate that farmers are taking action to reduce their emissions and are keen to see meaningful action on climate change across the agriculture and land sector:

71% of farmers have already invested in on-farm emissions reduction measures
64% of farmers plan to invest in additional emissions reduction measures in the next five years

Collaboration and advancing a regional carbon agenda

In the development of the SFFC Carbon Strategy, we aim to position the Southern Forests as a leader in carbon reduction efforts, guiding regions through the complexities of this critical issue. By leveraging our collaborative approach, the Southern Forests has the opportunity to set a benchmark for advancing a cohesive, regional carbon strategy that can be replicated by other areas across Western Australia.

The socio-economic benefits for the Southern Forests farmers include the potential for increased sustainability, enhanced productivity through improved land management practices, and possibly new revenue streams. Through activities outlined in this strategy, the region may also attract green investments and government incentives, contributing to the

overall economic growth of the local community. Moreover, implementing these strategies can improve the region's reputation for responsible and sustainable farming, opening up further opportunities in the national and international markets.

As a pioneer in this space, the Southern Forests can create a model that other regions in Western Australia can adopt, fostering regional collaboration and positioning the state as a leader in the global carbon reduction movement. The ripple effect of such leadership will help progress broader sustainability efforts, improve environmental outcomes, and strengthen the economic resilience of agricultural communities.

Our strategy

For the period of 2024-2025

Develop initial Green House Gases (carbon footprint) Accounts

- Identify appropriate tools/calculators for carbon accounting within the Southern Forests region.
- Identify and engage key stakeholders, including government bodies, businesses, supply chain, community groups, and residents.
- Develop initial Greenhouse Gas (GHG) accounts to understand current emission profiles across enterprises within the region.

Develop regional extension materials

- Present the findings of the calculator review and give a rundown on how to use it.
- Identify key contributors to emissions profiles of different enterprises within the Southern Forests region (based on aggregated data from participants);
- Outline potential strategies to reduce emissions within different parts of the emissions profiles.

During 2025 the SFFC will progress the following in support of this carbon neutral strategy:

- Develop emission reduction/carbon sequestration plans for each participant.
- Organise visits for participants to view relevant case studies of, or receive expert advice on, proposed practice change/s.
- Development of a toolkit to assist wider producers on starting their GHG Neutrality journey.

Implementation of the carbon neutral strategy will commence in 2026.

- Begin implementing the projects and initiatives outlined in the action plan.
- During this time the SFFC will continuously monitor the progress of the carbon neutral initiatives.
- Use data collection and analysis tools to track reductions in emissions and measure the effectiveness of implemented strategies.

From 2026 to 2028

- Conduct periodic reviews of the carbon neutral strategy to assess its effectiveness and make necessary adjustments.
- Continue to engage with producers to update existing and develop further GHG neutrality plans based on the monitoring and evaluation of initial plans
- Stay informed about new technologies and best practices in carbon reduction

Collaboration of Champions: Supporting the Southern Forests Carbon Strategy

For the Southern Forests carbon strategy to succeed, we need dedicated champions who can drive progress and inspire collaboration. At the heart of this effort are the farmers and the local community of the Southern Forests, whose participation and leadership are essential to ensure sustainable and meaningful outcomes.

A **shire-level champion** is crucial to coordinate efforts on the ground, connect with local stakeholders, and ensure that the strategy reflects the unique needs and strengths of the region. Additionally, a **state government champion** is necessary to provide the broader policy and resource support required for the strategy's success.

While our immediate focus is on building strong local and state-level leadership, we will also seek the **support of the Federal Government, and other supply chain partners**, when appropriate, to access additional resources and ensure alignment with national carbon reduction goals.

Above all, it is imperative that farmers participating in this initiative do not face a net loss in time or cost. We are committed to developing a strategy that supports the economic viability of farming while contributing to broader environmental and community goals. This balance will be key to long-term success, ensuring that farmers and the Southern Forests community benefit from leading the charge in carbon reduction.

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