



Right to Farm

Agreed to by the VFF Policy Council
Meeting 181
22 November 2023

Policy Statement

General Principles

1. The Victorian Farmers Federation believes that the Victorian Government must consult with farmers and farming communities on any change to the Planning or Environment systems to ensure that there are no adverse outcomes for agricultural industry.
2. The Victorian Farmers Federation seeks planning and environment protection systems and controls applied to the nearly two thirds of Victoria in rural zones to be specifically designed to support and encourage the safeⁱ and sustainableⁱⁱ production of food and fibre.
3. The Victorian Farmers Federation seek recognition of agriculture as a key economic driver in the Planning Policy Framework.
4. The Victorian Farmers Federation seeks the delivery of a planning system that does not limit climate change adaptation and mitigation measures including use of modern production systems.
5. The Victorian Farmers Federation seeks recognition in the planning and environment regulatory systems that agriculture is the preeminent use of land in Farming and Green Wedge Zones, including decision guidelines that ensure non-agricultural uses do not reduce agricultural production on the subject site.
6. The Victorian Farmers Federation calls for the regular review of the Victoria Planning Provisions to ensure policy and controls facilitate the use of farming land for production of food and fibre. This may be via a Standing Advisory Committee.

Regulatory Principles

7. The Victorian Farmers Federation recognises that structures and uses not linked to agriculture can restrict the ability to continue to farm, on that farm, and on neighbouring farms. We seek a planning system that avoids land use conflict.
8. The Victorian Farmers Federation seeks a planning and environmental effects system that fully accounts for impacts on individual farm businesses and production systems.

9. The Victorian Farmers Federation seeks amendments to the Green Wedge and Distinctive Areas and Landscape elements of the Planning and Environment Act to ensure that plans prepared for these areas must actively seek to protect and support agricultural production that is an intrinsic part of these landscapes.

Knowledge and Guidance

10. The Victorian Farmers Federation calls for accurate mapping of strategic agricultural land to underpin policy provisions to grow the economic importance of agriculture at local regional and state levels.
11. The Victorian Farmers Federation calls for planning provisions and decision support tools that not only protect strategic agricultural land from loss, but actively enables the adaptation of agriculture in response to climate change, market access changes, safety, technology and welfare considerations.
12. The Victorian Farmers Federation seeks the development and maintenance of guidance to planners on how to avoid land use conflicts from dwellings, renewable energy, places of assembly, tourism, and infrastructure.
13. The Victorian Farmers Federation seeks the development of a full range of practice notes and decision guidance notes to ensure proper consideration of impacts on Agriculture.
14. The Victorian Farmers Federation seeks to work with the Government in the preparation of guidance materials on planning permits and EPA approvals.

Planning System Outcomes

15. The Victorian Farmers Federation seeks the use of Ministerial Advisory Committees to consider changes to the Victoria Planning Provisions.
16. The Victorian Farmers Federation seeks the insertion of a State and Regionally Significant Agriculture clause into the Planning Policy Framework to provide clear guidance on how to avoid land use conflict, unplanned loss of agricultural land or controls that restrict safe operations on farm.
17. The Victorian Farmers Federation seeks planning policy framework content that supports consideration of impacts on agriculture in settlement policy, renewable energy policy, climate change policy and infrastructure policy.
18. The Victorian Farmers Federation seeks the reinstatement the application of the Farming Zone to farming land in a potable water supply catchment where an Environmental Significance Overlay is in place.
19. The Victorian Farmers Federation believes that all Guidelines (e.g., Wind Energy) used to make decisions on development types must reinforce the importance of policy and zone considerations in assessing the appropriateness of the proposal.

20. The Victorian Farmers Federation seeks direct consultation in the preparation of any control or guideline relating to renewable energy or transmission on farmland.
21. The Victorian Farmers Federation seeks the removal of VicSmart provisions that encourage section 2 uses on farmland without consideration of the purposes and decision guidelines of the Farming Zone.
22. The Victorian Farmers Federation believes the planning system must ensure farm practices that are compliant with industry accepted standards should not require a development permit. In the exceptional circumstance where a permit is triggered it should be facilitated through a VicSmart or Code assess process.
23. The Victorian Farmers Federation does not support specific environmental management system conditions on planning permits as this constrains the ability of industry to implement new technology and causes conflicts with the environment protection system.
24. The Victorian Farmers Federation seeks the removal of any exemption from direct landholder notice of any planning scheme change that will apply to farmland or have the potential to impact on farming land.

Environment Protection System Outcomes

25. The Victorian Farmers Federation seeks recognition of Rural Research and Development guidance as meeting the General Environmental Duty.
26. The Victorian Farmers Federation believes that sensitive uses such as schools, dwellings and places of assembly that require a permit in farming areas should not restrict farming activities which are as of right.
27. The Victorian Farmers Federation believes that environmental management reference standards should reflect a minimum standard to address risk. Farmers are encouraged to adopt best practice however not every farm can implement best practice considering site specifics and other regulatory objectives.
28. The Victorian Farmers Federation seeks a review of industrial waste definition to ensure that the safe and legal use of organic material as fertiliser is removed from the term.

This statement should be read in conjunction with the VFF policy statements:

Managing Entry to Farm; Climate Change ; Biosecurity; Pest Plant and Animal ; Emergency Management (Natural Hazards) Policy; Good Neighbour.

ⁱ The objectives of Planning in Victoria at s4 of the Planning and Environment Act include:

- a) *to provide for the fair, orderly, economic and sustainable use and development of land;*
- c) *to secure a pleasant, efficient and safe working, living and recreational environment for all Victorians and visitors to Victoria;*

ⁱⁱ Sustainable agriculture is defined in the Victoria Planning Provisions as:

The use of farming practices and systems which maintain or enhance:

- a) *the economic viability of agricultural production;*
- b) *the natural resource base; and*
- c) *other ecosystems which are influenced by agricultural activities.*