



Hon Josh Frydenberg MP  
Treasurer of the Commonwealth of Australia

By Email: [prebudgetsubs@treasury.gov.au](mailto:prebudgetsubs@treasury.gov.au)

25<sup>th</sup> January 2022

Dear Treasurer

**Ediblescapes Inc. haven been part of the process, support and adapt in all term of the submission of Sustain: The Australian Food Network. Show below.**

Thank you for considering this prebudget submission for the 2022-23 budget.

Yours sincerely,

**Jorge Cantellano**  
Ediblescapes Inc Coordinator

### **2022-23 pre-budget submission on sustainable food systems, urban agriculture and edible gardening**

Sustain: The Australian Food Network appreciates the opportunity to provide this submission to you for consideration in preparation of the 2022-23 Federal Budget. Sustain is a national body and registered health promotion charity representing 30 member organisations, including 13 local governments, and over 130 individual members who work together towards building a healthy, sustainable and fair food system that benefits all Australians.

Our members support policy levers that shift individual and organisational activity towards a fair food system that has as its goal above all else, the long-term health and wellbeing of the community. Sustain would like to see the Government realise the significant return on investment and potential of regenerative urban agriculture and edible gardening to address a number of significant community issues and to deliver multiple beneficial outcomes through the simple act of growing nutritious food.

**Diet-related ill-health and mental illness cost Australia around \$200 bn every year.** Climate change costs are anticipated to grow, with extreme weather events alone costing the Australian economy \$35 billion over the past decade. While Australia ranks as one of the most food secure countries in the world at a macro level, at the community level vulnerable communities disproportionately experience barriers to access nutritionally adequate, safe, and affordable food. Food insecurity is associated with poor mental and physical health with approximately 800,000 adults per year experiencing food insecurity. These figures have increased sharply in the wake of the substantial economic disruption experienced as a result of the policy responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.



This budget will be decided in the context of pandemic recovery. This will require a prioritising of policies across all sectors that strengthen resilience and equity while delivering the critical health outcomes for all Australians.

**Our members are seeking a \$500 million investment over three years in an edible gardening fund** to support a mass expansion of urban agriculture activities across Australia. The budget priority areas identified below will assist our sector to contribute to the important goals of supporting preventative health, climate resilience, food security and employment outcomes for disadvantaged groups, including:

- **\$137.25 million to create 2,875 jobs nationwide** to expand the network of community gardens and local government facilitated urban agriculture activity across Australia
- **\$35.460 million in grant funding to support all public schools receive a \$5000 grant to establish and maintain edible gardens, directly benefiting 2.59 million students' nationwide**
- **\$12 million grant fund for urban food networks, urban agriculture organisations and cooperatives to expand edible gardening across the country**
- **\$41.615 million infrastructure funding to establish or expand community gardens, school gardens, allotment gardens, low income housing edible gardens**
- **\$42.75 million to subsidise local councils that provide rate discounts to incentivise urban agriculture**
- **\$225 million in urban agriculture subsidies for social prescribing referrals made by GPs**
- **\$12.5 million for research collaborations on impact and benefits of urban agriculture and edible gardening.**

There is a growing body of evidence that shows the simple act of gardening provides substantial human health benefits, such as reductions in depression, anxiety, and body mass index, as well as increases in life satisfaction, quality of life, and sense of community. In 2020 we validated these findings in the Australian context, with a national Pandemic Gardening survey that received 9,140 responses. 98% of respondents reported that edible gardening either greatly or substantially improved their mental health.

Additionally, the urban agriculture sector is poised as a significant policy lever to drive a growth in household consumption of vegetables. In 2018, the AIHW estimated only 7% of adults and 5% of children ate sufficient serves of vegetables, and the overall proportion of people with adequate vegetable consumption has decreased since 2004–05. **A modest 5% growth in vegetable production through the above investment in urban agriculture activities across Australia would see an additional \$4.1 billion gross value in the economy.**

**If vegetable consumption also rises by 5% a further \$50 million per annum savings to the budget is estimated as a result of reduced medical treatment and procedures.** Other benefits that can be seen in international examples of urban agriculture include:

- agricultural practices that support national soil strategy activity on soil rejuvenation and climate action on carbon sequestration
- innovation in agriculture through circular economic recycling of organic waste streams
- greater access to fresh and affordable food in communities disproportionately experiencing food insecurity



- training and employment pathways as well as small business creation, as recently validated in a survey mapping the urban agriculture sector in Victoria that we have conducted for Agriculture Victoria

Thank you for considering this prebudget submission for the 2022-23 budget.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Nick Rose

Dr Nick Rose  
Executive Director

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