



FARM TO PLATE ACTION PLAN 2019 - 2020

Introduction

The purpose of the Murray Regional Tourism Farm to Plate Action Plan is to provide strategic direction and guidance on the activities Murray Regional Tourism (MRT) will focus on to capitalise on the opportunities identified within the Murray Farm to Plate program.

In order to grow the visitor economy and remain competitive, it is critical the Murray region can celebrate our authentic, diverse agri and culinary tourism offerings which are available throughout the destination and ensure we can continue to improve and expand those aligned to consumer demands into the future.

It's widely recognised that the food and beverage of a geographic area is a reflection of the local culture, traditions and legacies that have connected people and communities for generations.

It is this authenticity that drives people to seek out food and wine experiences and has given rise to growing trends around food and wine tourism. Visitors are increasingly seeking local bespoke experiences that are immersive and central to the identity found in their destination of choice. They are seeking real connections and food has become a primary vehicle to relate to the people and places they explore. Globally, these experiences have gained rapid appeal, with greater awareness of produce traceability and provenance.

MRT on the back of the Murray Farm to Plate program has developed this focussed action plan to ensure we can address these consumer trends, leverage the work undertaken to date and strengthen our position to be a recognised agri and culinary tourism destination into the future.

Strategic Context

MRT as the peak cross border regional tourism organisation for the Murray region, is responsible for driving the overarching tourism strategy that aims to grow the visitor economy and make the Murray a must visit destination.

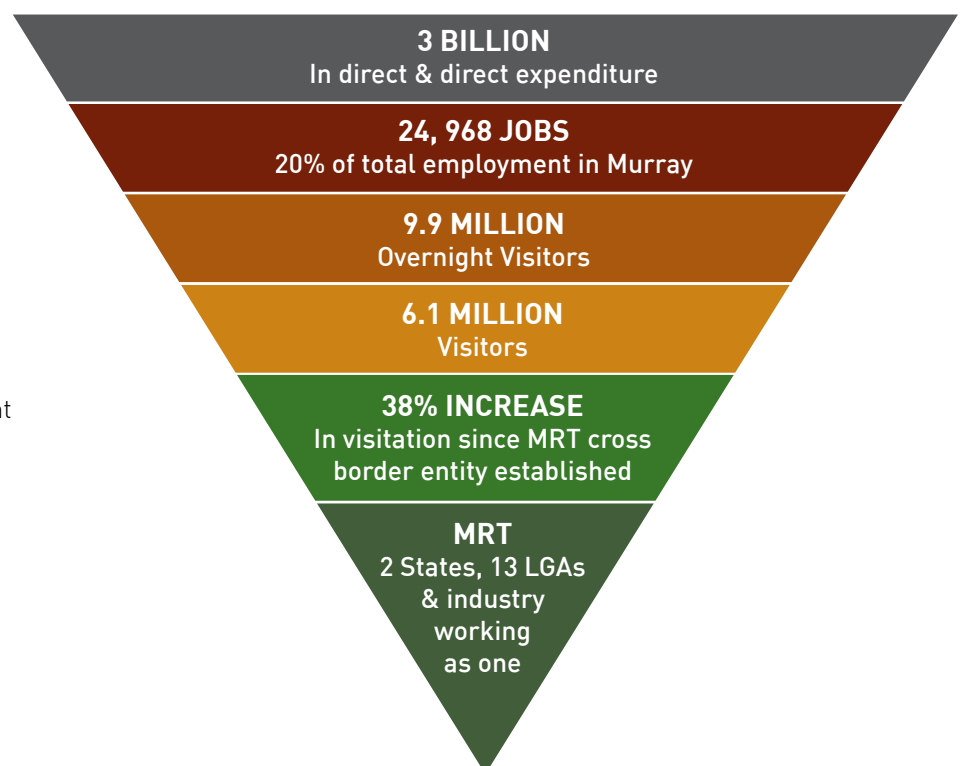
The organisation operates with a five year Murray Regional Tourism Strategic Plan which aims to:

- drive increased visitation
- increase length of stay
- increase visitor expenditure
- encourage public and private sector investment
- diversify the region's products and experiences which are on offer.

To achieve these desired outcomes, MRT took a lead role in the development of the Murray Farm to Plate program and subsequent development of this Murray Regional Tourism Farm to Plate Action plan.

The need for strategic intervention in Food, Beverage and Agritourism was identified as a gap and subsequent opportunity in the Murray Region Destination Management Plan.

Importance of the visitor economy to the Murray region



In particular two specific gaps were identified:

- There are few unique and/or destination dining experiences in the Murray Region, particularly restaurants that have river views
- Although the region has a strong agricultural sector, there are a limited number of cellar doors and farm gate experiences. Visitor access to the region's product is limited

In order to address the above, MRT developed the Murray Farm to Plate program. The Murray Farm to Plate program is a regional cross-border agri-tourism initiative designed to boost the region's food and drink related products and experiences by improving the quality, authenticity and availability of offerings to visitors and locals.

The program was delivered in partnership with Local Government within the Murray Region and both the NSW and Victorian Governments which aimed to accelerate resolving these challenges and build the Murray region visitor economy.

The breadth of the strategic opportunities identified within the broader Murray Farm to Plate program cut across many sectors and areas of operation. As such, it will be important that a broad range of stakeholders from industry and government collaborate to achieve the vision for the region which is:

OUR VISION

“By 2025 the Murray Region will be renowned for its high quality, authentic food and drink products and experiences”

Overview of the Murray Farm to Plate program

In 2016, MRT identified agri and culinary tourism as a potential experience theme across the region to focus and commenced scoping the project development with the focus on:

- agri and culinary tourism potential of the region
- best approach for facilitating its development
- level of support from regional stakeholders and other partners.

An initial discussion paper was developed through a series of workshops with key partners and industry.

This research phase revealed there was an opportunity to tap into the region's high quality produce, diversified beverage and dining offering, strong interest and desire to develop the sector, along with the common shared opportunity across the Murray region to grow this sector.

MRT took a lead role in scoping the project and securing investment to deliver a program which would provide strategic intervention to fast track the sector's development and included the following elements:

- Murray Farm to Plate Strategic Opportunities Report
- Development of five geographical based local cluster plans across the Murray
- Three pilot projects to test and facilitate change

The above projects were completed in 2018 and now create a pathway for industry to work in collaboration with government to address the key issues identified which currently impede the development and growth of agri and culinary tourism:

- An expectation by consumers that regional experiences will offer local produce as part of the food and drink offering and that they will have access to agri and culinary tourism experiences on and off farm
- Significant challenges in identifying and accessing the region's fresh seasonal and value-added produce from a consumer, visitor and commercial food service perspective
- Recognition that the food system is designed to supply urban-based central markets, which in turn supply back to regions
- Real barriers that prevent farmers from diversifying into tourism or value-adding their produce – knowledge and regulation are two key factors
- The fact that tourism, hospitality and agriculture do not connect easily
- The absence of a current system of provenance to understand seasonality and to connect the produce to the source.

MRT Approach

In order to capitalise on the Murray Farm to Plate project, MRT have identified a range of visitor focussed actions which it can drive and facilitate in partnership with our stakeholders to deliver on some of the strategic opportunities identified.

The key actions identified in the plan are aligned and integrated into our core overarching organisational strategic pillars of:

- Product Development
- Advocacy and Leadership
- Marketing
- Industry Development

The Murray Regional Tourism Farm to Plate Action Plan provides the framework for the next two years to align a range of visitor economy focussed initiatives to help grow the regions agritourism and culinary sector.

The plan importantly is designed to be consumer focussed and support a range of government plans and strategies to deliver sustained growth to the visitor economy.



OUR APPROACH

“MRT have identified a range of visitor focussed actions which it can drive and facilitate in partnership with our stakeholders to deliver on some of the strategic opportunities identified within the Murray Farm to Plate Program “



Strategy 1: **PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT**

Develop the supply of high-quality produce

ACTION	ROLE	2019	2020
REGIONAL FOOD CHAMPIONS/QUALITY EXPERIENCES			
1. Undertake an audit of existing agri and culinary tourism products that can be profiled in future activities.	●	✓	
2. Provide support as appropriate to regional clusters to assist them to establish quality experiences that fulfil consumer demand and fill product gaps.	●▶	
3. Work with clusters to strengthen the farmgate trail concept across the region including key product experiences which could be included in trail itineraries.	●▶	

Strategy 2: **ADVOCACY & LEADERSHIP**








Connect the regional food system to distribute regional produce efficiently while maintaining provenance

ACTION	ROLE	2019	2020
REGIONAL INCUBATOR PROGRAMS			
4. Advocate as appropriate to government on the importance of and benefits derived from funding appropriate programs which enable agri and culinary tourism business to be supported during establishment or growth phases.	●▶	
POLICY & REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT			
5. Provide input into reviews of regulatory reforms as appropriate that aid agri and culinary tourism development and support regional efficiencies.	●▶	






Strategy 3: REGIONAL MARKETING & BRAND

Drive demand for regional food/drink produce and experiences

ACTION	ROLE	2019	2020
MURRAY FARM TO PLATE BRAND			
6. Integrate the Murray's reputation as a food bowl and agri / culinary tourism destination into ongoing brand activities.	▶	
7. Investigate the opportunity to utilise existing Murray brand assets to incorporate provenance messaging.		✓	
MARKETING PLAN & CAMPAIGN			
8. Align overarching marketing strategy activation across relevant channels (media, digital, PR, events etc) to incorporate farm to plate content and messaging as appropriate.	▶	
9. Leverage partnership opportunities with State, Federal and Industry Agencies as appropriate to drive demand for visitation to the Murray region.	▶	
LOCAL FOOD CULTURE			
10. Encourage clusters to include agri and culinary experiences within their local initiatives targeting the visiting friends and relatives market.	▶	
EVENTS & ACTIVATIONS			
11. Coordinate a seasonal calendar of events which draws together the regions agri and culinary events to build consumer awareness and potential visitation.		✓	
12. Encourage clusters to explore the development of future events based on seasonal themes and hero produce.			✓

Strategy 4: INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT

Create a platform for regional collaboration across the Farm to Plate value chain

ACTION	ROLE	2019	2020
INDUSTRY EVENTS			
13. In developing annual industry development and training program, identify opportunities to integrate relevant topics which support and upskill the agritourism / culinary sector to enhance or develop new visitor experiences.	▶	
REGIONAL DATA			
14. Share research and insights which become available to assist and inform agri and culinary tourism product development and visitor experiences.	▶	
REGIONAL CLUSTERS			
15. Provide support to clusters where appropriate for activities which involve farm to plate product development and tourism experience initiatives.	▶	