



Victorian
Farmers
Federation

VICTORIAN FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN

Protecting our critical farmland

April 2026



KEY STATISTICS

25% from 3%

Victoria produces a quarter of the nation's food and fibre from a fraction of Australia's farmland

11.2m by 2056

Victoria's forecast population, increasing both pressure on agricultural land and local demand for food production

6,500 MCGs

The area of farmland lost to housing development alone in Victoria over the past decade

8x more productive

Victorian farmland is eight times more productive per hectare than the national average

41% down to 18%

Melbourne's foodbowl capacity to meet the city's food needs is projected to fall from 41% to just 18% as the population grows

Mental health impacts

Federation University (2025) research found serious mental health impacts from poorly planned energy and mining development

WHY WE NEED A FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN

Protecting Australia's most productive farmland

Victoria's farmland produces a quarter of the nation's food from just three per cent of Australia's arable land, making it among the most productive agricultural land in the world. Australia's best farmland deserves Australia's strongest farmland protection regime — yet Victoria has fallen behind other states in providing one.

Victoria's population is forecast to grow to 11.2 million by 2056. This growth will not only place direct pressure on agricultural land through urban expansion but will also increase local demand for the food and fibre that Victorian farms produce. At the same time, the productivity gains that sustained decades of agricultural growth are slowing and water availability is being reduced by both climate change and policy decisions. Against this backdrop, farmland across the state is being taken out of production for energy infrastructure, mining and housing development, with no comprehensive framework to measure what is being lost or what the long-term implications are for food security.

Victoria currently lacks the data to fully understand the extent of agricultural land loss or the cumulative impact of planning decisions on long-term food production. Across regional Victoria, land use conflicts are dividing farming communities, non-disclosure agreements are silencing landholders, and the mental health toll on those living through sustained periods of conflict and uncertainty is significant and growing. NSW and Queensland have both established independent commissioners, dedicated agricultural land protections and statutory right to farm legislation. Victoria has none of these protections.

The VFF's Farmland Protection Plan sets out a clear, actionable platform to ensure our farmland and farming communities finally receive the protection they deserve.

FOUR PILLARS

Compensation & Community Benefits

Fair compensation, genuine community benefits and a productivity fund that drives real investment

Rehabilitation & Decommissioning

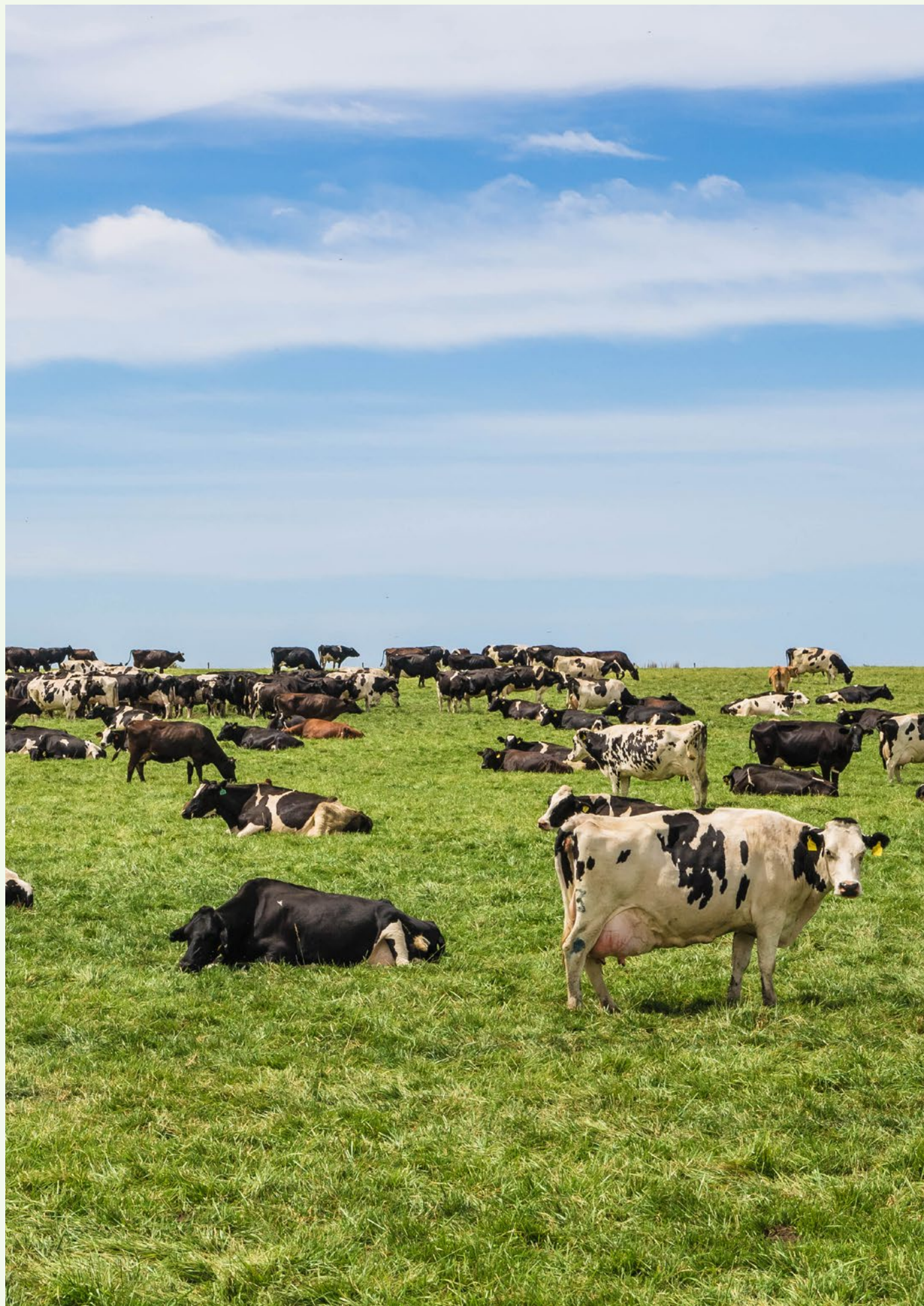
Scientifically backed rehabilitation outcomes focused on future productivity and financial research and a state backed pooled fund

Planning & Community Engagement

An independent Commissioner, cumulative agricultural impact assessment, and a genuine and empowered community voice

Guaranteeing the Right to Farm

A Right to Farm Act, buyer disclosure, trespass enforcement, and specialist firefighting



Compensation & Community Benefits

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Victoria's compensation frameworks for energy, transmission and mining infrastructure are fragmented, inequitable and opaque. A farmer hosting a wind farm, a farmer whose land is compulsorily acquired for transmission and a farmer living alongside a mineral sands mine are each subject to entirely different compensation regimes yet the impact on their land, their business and their community may be equally significant. Compulsory acquisition powers allow projects to proceed regardless of a landholder's willingness, often at rates well below what is achieved through commercial negotiation.

Farmers are left negotiating individually against well resourced corporations, with no transparency about what constitutes a fair deal. Long-term productivity losses are neither properly measured nor adequately compensated and developer contributions that flow to host communities are too often used to subsidise services that government should already be funding rather than driving strategic investment in the future of agriculture.

OUR PRINCIPLES

Comparable Compensation

Farmers and landholders must receive commercially comparable returns regardless of project type recognising the unique nature of agricultural businesses; projects subject to compulsory acquisition should pay an equivalent rate to commercially negotiated projects.

Productivity Impact Assessment

Long term productivity impacts must be properly scientifically measured, financially modelled and duly compensated, with scope for adjustment if rehabilitation outcomes differ from pre-project baselines.

Additionality

Royalties and developer contributions that flow to host communities must not be used to let government off the hook for services it should already be funding. These contributions must be additional to existing government commitments.

Shared Prosperity

Communities hosting energy and mining projects should share in the wealth generated through a dedicated fund focused on enhancing agricultural productivity across the state.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

1. Legislate to ensure compensation for compulsorily acquired or statutorily accessed farmland is benchmarked to commercially negotiated rates, such as those paid for hosting wind turbines.
2. Reform the ESVF so that renewable energy projects pay at a rate equivalent to their true site value, rather than the discounted 'public benefit' classification.
3. Require compensation for mining projects, renewables and transmission lines to properly scientifically and agronomically account for long term productivity loss, with adjustment mechanisms tied to post rehabilitation outcomes against pre project baselines.
4. Establish a Royalties for Regions model that pools mandatory contributions from renewables, mining and transmission, directing 50% of proceeds to an Agriculture Productivity Fund for supply chain capability, value adding and farm productivity with the remainder to be invested more broadly in host communities.
5. Government to seed the Agriculture Productivity Fund with a \$200 million initial investment.



Planning & Community Engagement

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Victoria's planning system gives insufficient weight to agricultural productivity, food security and water resources when assessing new developments on farmland. There is no independent body tracking how much farmland is being taken out of production, no requirement to assess cumulative impacts across a region and no mechanism for communities to set limits on the scale of development within their area. Engagement with farming communities is

too often opaque, disrespectful of the realities of farm operations and conducted without genuine understanding of the multigenerational, long-term nature of farming businesses. Farmers are expected to navigate complex planning processes for multiple overlapping projects with no recognition of the burden this places on individuals and families. NSW and Queensland have both established independent oversight of agricultural land use. Victoria has none.

OUR PRINCIPLES

Agricultural Productivity at the Centre

The planning system must give proper weight to short and long term agricultural productivity, water and food security when assessing new projects on farmland.

Independent Oversight

An independent statutory body should track, report on, and provide expert input to decisions affecting farmland, irrigation and communities, as other states already do.

Informed Decision-Making

Farm financial, production, environmental and social impacts over the long term must be understood before projects go ahead.

Community Voice

Communities should have a genuine say in how much development is acceptable within their Local Government Area.

Last Resort

Compulsory acquisition should be an instrument of last resort – only available once 90% of landholders have voluntarily agreed.

Respectful Engagement

Engagement with farming communities must be transparent, respectful, and conducted with proper understanding of farm operations and the complexities and long term multigenerational and geographically dispersed aspects of farming.

Right to Say No

Right for a landholder to say 'no' to mining projects.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

1. Establish a statutory Farmland and Food Security Commissioner to compile comprehensive agricultural land and water data, report annually to Parliament on land use change and trends and provide input to planning applications on cumulative impacts and productivity loss.
2. Reform Victorian planning laws to require detailed assessment of agricultural productivity impacts with mandated input from the Commissioner including granting of mining licences.
3. Require buffer zones for renewables to be contained within the host property unless commercial consent is granted by neighbours. Increase setbacks to 2 km for wind turbines exceeding 200 m tip height.
4. Establish cumulative impact caps by LGA, allowing communities to set their own limits on the extent of mining, energy and housing development.
5. Ban non disclosure agreements that prevent landholders from speaking about their experience with developers.
6. Mandate agriculture industry led training for companies and subcontractors accessing farmland, covering biosecurity, farm safety and operational requirements.
7. Invest in mental health support and ongoing quantified reporting on the impacts in farming communities undergoing major land use change.



Rehabilitation & Decommissioning

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Australia is approaching its first wave of wind and solar farm decommissioning with almost no evidence base for returning land to productive agriculture. The Victorian Auditor-General has identified a \$361 million shortfall in mining rehabilitation bonds and there is currently no requirement for renewable energy developers to lodge decommissioning bonds with government at all. If a project proponent fails or

walks away, farmers risk being left with the bill for restoring their own land. The science underpinning rehabilitation standards is underdeveloped, the true long-term costs of returning farmland to productive capacity are poorly understood and there is no pooled mechanism to ensure that rehabilitation happens regardless of a proponent's financial viability.

OUR PRINCIPLES

Binding Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation of farmland to productive capacity must be a binding condition of any temporary land use, backed by credible science, agronomy and financial modelling.

No Farmer Left Behind

No individual farmer or farming community should bear the cost of rehabilitating land if a project proponent fails or walks away.

Government Investment in Science

Government has a responsibility to invest in the science that underpins rehabilitation standards and integrate this into any project plans across renewables, transmission and mining.

True Cost Accounting

The true cost of a project needs to be properly accounted for including community costs, from project inception to full decommissioning and closing the gate.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

1. Fund a dedicated research program on site rehabilitation and decommissioning, demonstrating to what productive and economic capacity farmland can be restored to after mining or renewables and establishing evidence based standards.
2. Establish a pooled, state backed rehabilitation fund for all temporary land uses on farmland, ensuring no project is left unrehabilitated regardless of the financial viability of the proponent.
3. Make rehabilitation and decommissioning plans publicly available and subject to community consultation. Plan approval should be contingent on restoration of pre project agricultural productivity to well understood and agreed upon standards.
4. Pause the approval of new mineral sands mining licences and work plans until the reforms in this plan are complete.



Guaranteeing the Right to Farm

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Victoria has no standalone right to farm legislation, despite being home to Australia's most productive farmland. NSW enshrined the right to farm in law in 2019, providing farmers with a statutory defence against nuisance claims and among the toughest trespass penalties in the country. Queensland is now moving to legislate similar protections. In Victoria, farmers conducting lawful operations on their own land remain exposed to nuisance claims,

trespass penalties are weak and there is no formal requirement for buyers moving into rural or peri-urban areas to be informed about the realities of living in or alongside farming communities. As the interface between agricultural and residential land use grows, so too does the potential for conflict and Victorian farmers have fewer legal protections than their counterparts in other states.

OUR PRINCIPLES

Lawful Activity, Legal Protection

Farming is a lawful, essential activity and farmers should not be penalised for conducting normal operations on their own land.

Buyer Awareness

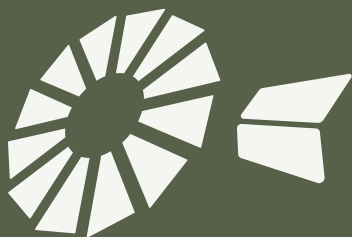
People moving to rural areas or in new peri-urban or green wedge areas must understand and accept the realities of farming and living in farming areas before they purchase.

Safety and Security

Farmers, their families and their communities must be protected from trespass, intimidation, insurance and safety risks created by new land uses or other external influences.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

1. Enact a Victorian Right to Farm Act, modelled on the NSW legislation, providing a statutory defence against nuisance claims for lawful commercial agricultural activities and preventing courts from ordering complete cessation of farming where modification is possible.
2. Mandate informational resources for new landholders purchasing or renting in rural and farming zones via Section 32 vendor disclosure notices and the Residential Tenancies Act, explaining the nature of farming operations, potential impacts, and the right to farm.
3. Strengthen enforcement of trespass laws to prevent activist led trespassing, bringing penalties in line with NSW standards (up to 12 months imprisonment and \$220,000 for individuals on agricultural land).
4. Establish a dedicated firefighting unit with specialist skills and training to respond to fires in and around energy infrastructure, ensuring CFA volunteers are not exposed to risks they are not equipped to manage.



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