

**Report No. 2      Potential for Additional Farmers Markets**

**Director:** Governance and Community Services

**File No:** /#641197

**Principal Activity:** Property Management/ Community Planning

**Purpose:** To provide information relating to the potential for additional Farmer's Markets.

**Summary:** Two farmers markets currently operate in the Byron Shire. The success, acceptance and broader economic, social and environmental benefits of these markets means there is a high potential for additional farmers markets driven by:

- Grass roots consumer support for access to farmers markets in different locations and times to existing markets
- Local producer support for improving stallholder access to farmers markets
- Council's strategic support through the Sustainable Agriculture Strategy (SAS) and Sustainable Agriculture Officer (and Sustainable Agriculture Roundtable (SART)).
- An existing framework for it's development through the Markets Policy and Markets Liaison Group

Policy No 5.51 allows for, but restricts, farmers markets on Council land to Monday to Thursday, and at least 48 hours prior to the start of any community market in each established geographical district of the Shire.

The Market Liaison Group is the primary source of advice to Council on all matters relating to the operation of markets in the Shire, including any proposal to operate new markets. This group agreed on 16 March 2007 to pursue the development of additional farmers markets in the northern part of the Shire.

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

**1. That Council note the following report and support its Sustainable Agriculture Strategy, to facilitate the establishment of additional farmer markets through the Market Liaison Group.**

***Attachments:***

- Minutes of the March Market Liaison Group Meeting #663359 (3 Pages).....**Annexure 13**

## **Background**

At its meeting of 14 March 2006 Council resolved to:

1. "receive a report on performance of current Farmer's Markets' and
2. 'receive a report on the potential for additional Farmer's Markets'".

This report satisfies the second resolution.

## **Key Issues**

- Appropriate management of Council owned and controlled properties
- Support for objectives within Council's Sustainable Agriculture Strategy (SAS) and efforts of Council's Sustainable Agriculture Officer
- Access to existing markets by local producers and consumers

## **Relationship to Management/Strategic Plan**

A key strategy of Byron Council's Sustainable Agriculture Strategy is to 'develop a vital, diversified, 'clean and green' agricultural sector that provides profitable farm incomes and employment for the community'. A high priority action is to 'support and facilitate the establishment of local farmers markets'. The Sustainable Agriculture Round table reinforced this as a high priority for Council's Sustainable Agriculture Officer in April 2006.

## **Consultation**

Consultation has taken place with Byron Farmers Markets Association (Ex) Manager Joni Teal, the Sustainable Agriculture Round table (SART) and members of the Byron Shire Markets Liaison Group.

## **Finance/Resource Implications**

The facilitation of additional farmers markets can be achieved as part of the implementation of the Sustainable Agriculture Strategy.

## **Legal/Policy Implications**

Byron Shire Council *Policy 5.51 Markets within Byron Shire* sets out:

*The Council will regulate markets conducted on any public or private lands as defined in the Local Government Act, 1993, and will participate in policing of the provision of the Act, or other relevant Acts, eg. Food Act, 1989, in those areas declared to be "market locations" by Council within the meaning of that Act.*

## **Sustainability Implications**

### Social / Cultural

Farmers markets provide access to fresh, healthy local produce at competitive prices, and allow consumers to enjoy the atmosphere and experience of farmers' markets. They provide an important forum for education and the raising of awareness, and to establish links between local producers and consumers, including tourism.

Farmers' markets have a catalytic impact on the local community, as measured by part-time employment, prices paid and received leadership opportunities created and increased diversity in locally produced products and services.

### Economic

Farmers markets provide a highly accessible and profitable market for local farmers, although the dependence on them varies between farmers. They provide high quality resources for local cuisine and dining and important links to tourism. There is also an economic benefit to the whole

community as more money is spent in the local economy, providing a multiplier effect as money stays locally as it is spent on wages for local people or in buying local produce.

Local producers engaged with direct marketing also benefit from the opportunity to develop their marketing and business expertise through increased networking and learning from other farmers and consumers, further developing local business capacity.

### Environmental

Farmers markets provide a strong basis for sustainable agriculture as they support small-scale, intensive farming (including organic), which is likely to increase in the Byron Shire. They shorten the supply chain, benefiting both farmers and consumers, and 'food miles' – the distance food travels. There is also less packaging and refrigeration.

### **Options**

1. Council support the recommendation.
2. Council make further recommendations to the Market Liaison Group regarding the development of farmers markets.

### **Information**

Currently there are 2 farmers markets operating in the Byron Shire:

- Thursday (am) Markets in Byron Bay – at Butler St Reserve (licenced on Crown land)
- Saturday (am) Markets in Bangalow – behind Bangalow Hotel (unlicenced on private land)

An additional 8 twilight markets were permitted over the 2006/07 summer under the current licence for 60 markets/year. All farmer's markets are administered by the Byron Farmers Markets Association (BFMA) and all stallholders must be members of the BFMA.

### **Support:**

- The success of existing farmers markets has produced a recognised demand for additional markets at alternate locations and times to current farmer's markets.
- Councils' market policy allows for additional farmers markets:  
*'Legitimate farmers markets may seek approval to operate on any appropriately zoned Council owned or controlled site within the Shire on any selected weekday Monday to Thursday, providing that there is at least 48 hours between the starting time of any farmers market and the starting time of any existing community market in each established geographical district of the Shire'.*
- Stallholder access has been an on-going issue with existing markets i.e. the number of growers permitted to sell a particular product is limited by the Byron Farmers Markets Association. Additional farmers markets would provide access to those producers currently unable to sell their produce.
- Byron Shire's Sustainable Agriculture Roundtable supports the further development of farmer's markets and has made this a priority of Council's Sustainable Agriculture Officer.

### **Limitations:**

- Council's Market Policy (5.51) allows for, but restricts, farmers markets on Council land to Monday to Thursday, and at least 48 hours prior to the start of any community market in each established geographical district of the Shire.
- Some opposition to additional farmers markets would be expected, including:
  - Opposition from existing retailers of fresh produce in proposed market areas
  - Opposition from neighbours to proposed market sites regarding noise & traffic

- Opposition from stallholders in existing markets
- Opposition to the existing BFMA running additional farmers markets.

Though it appears that farmers' markets are competitors to supermarkets and other outlets, many retailers agree that they complement each other by increasing total sale volumes on market days. This is demonstrated by general retailer support in Bangalow and Byron Bay.

### **Opportunities:**

It is generally accepted that the southern portion of the Shire is catered for, and that opportunities exist for additional farmers markets to be located in:

- Brunswick Heads
- Mullumbimby
- Ocean Shores

Byron Shire's Market Liaison Group was established to be the primary source of advice to Council on all matters relating to the viable and orderly operation of public markets. Specifically, the Liaison Group must be consulted concerning any proposal to operate new or additional markets and on any proposed amendment to the Markets Policy.

At its meeting of March 1 2007 the Market Liaison Group agreed to ask existing not-for-profit groups to consider forming an appropriate farmers group to hold an additional farmers market, in line with the existing Markets Policy.

### **Conclusion:**

This assessment concludes that there is significant potential for additional farmers markets, particularly in the northern part of the Shire. A framework exists for the development of additional markets through the Markets Policy, Market Liaison Group and Council's Sustainable Agriculture Officer.

The Market Liaison Group is the primary source of advice to Council on any proposal to operate new markets. This group agreed on 16 March 2007 to pursue the development of additional farmers markets in the northern part of the Shire. It is recommended that Council endorse the outcomes of this meeting, and support the efforts of the Sustainable Agriculture Officer to facilitate the establishment of additional farmer markets.