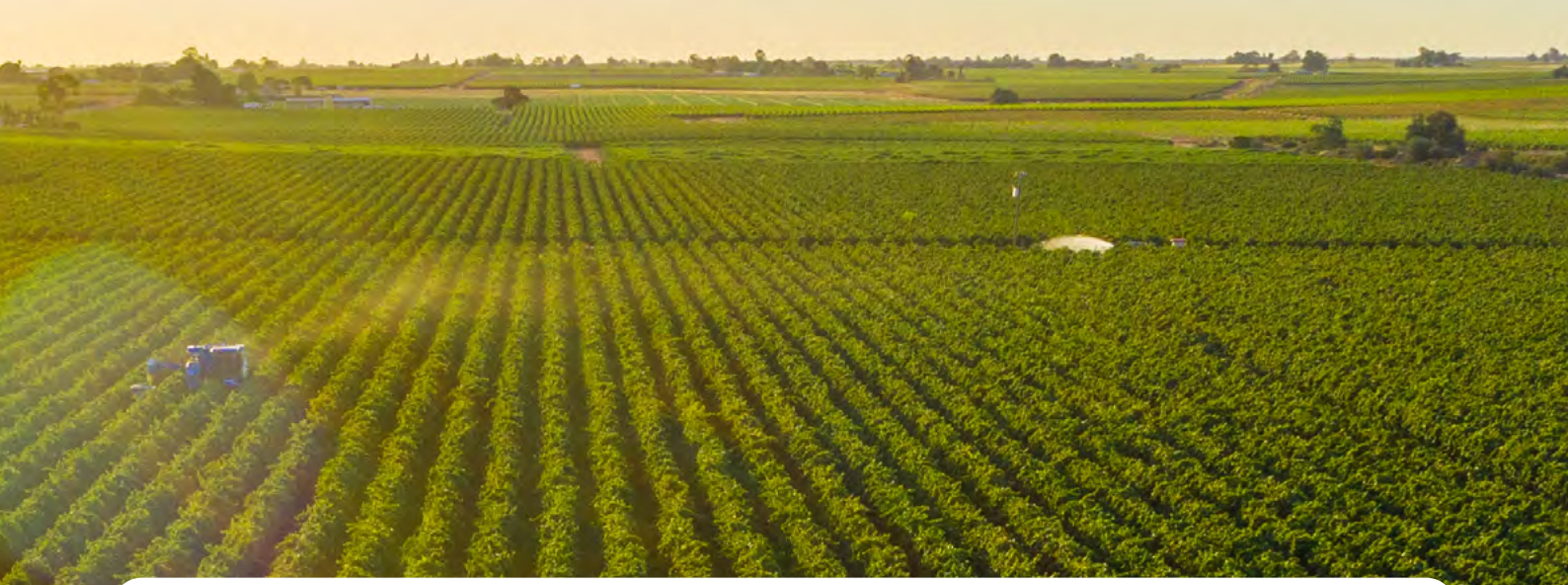


INLAND GROWER REVENUE OPTIONS (I-GRO)
DIVERSIFICATION GUIDE

I-GRO Discussion Tool

For service providers supporting inland winegrape growers planning diversification



Who supported the Diversification Guide?

The I-GRO Diversification Guide was funded by the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry in response to the recommendations of the Viticulture and Wine Sector Working Group.

The content and consultation for the project was undertaken by RM Consulting Group (RMCG).

RMCG

Version 1.2, June 2026

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- Murray Valley Winegrowers
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- Riverland Wine
- Tenacious Ventures
- Adelaide University
- Wine Australia

RMCG would also like to thank the many winegrape growers, service providers, industry associations, government agencies and other stakeholders consulted throughout the project for their time and input.

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the Country on which we work throughout Australia and recognise their enduring connection to the land, waters, and culture. We pay our respects to their Elders, both past and present, and acknowledge emerging leaders. Furthermore, we express our gratitude for the knowledge and insights that Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples contribute to our collective work in Australia.

We extend our respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. We acknowledge that Australia was founded on the genocide and dispossession of First Nations peoples and affirm that sovereignty was never ceded in this country. We embrace the spirit of reconciliation, striving towards self-determination, equitable outcomes, and an equal voice for Australia's First Peoples.

The I-GRO Discussion Tool is part of the I-GRO Diversification Guide. It supports service providers to work with inland winegrape growers in the Murray Valley, Riverina and Riverland to identify, analyse and inform decisions about diversifying their farm businesses, including alternative farm revenue streams that will improve long-term business viability.

Service providers can use the I-GRO Discussion Tool to support individual winegrape growers to work through the accompanying Grower Workbook and the parts most relevant to their farm business.

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Introduction

Industry context and drivers

Australia's inland winegrape growers in the Murray Valley, Riverina and Riverland face challenging economic and environmental conditions. The current landscape for inland winegrape growers continues to be challenging with:

- **Several years of low returns and cashflow pressure** mean growers need to stem the losses and identify viable alternative options.
- **Oversupply of red wine**, particularly Shiraz and Cabernet Sauvignon. Approximately 70%[1] of Australia's wine is grown in inland regions, and over 60% of its plantings are red varieties[2].
- **Reduced demand** as consumers drink less wine, contributing to increased wine inventory and stock to sales ratio. This is particularly pronounced with **white wine**[3].
- Shifts in **global wine markets**, including recent trade bans and declining value, highlighting the vulnerability of the region's bulk wine production[4].
- **Constrained water supply** from an over-allocated Murray-Darling Basin system. Water costs are projected to rise as the market shifts to higher value perennial crops.
- **Global supply chain disruption** with impacts on the cost and availability of inputs (e.g. diesel fuel, fertilisers).
- **Increasing seasonal variability and extreme weather events** (e.g. hail, flooding, heatwave, out-of-season frost). These regions are among the 'top 10' for change in Growing Degree Days, Rainfall, Aridity; the regions are becoming hotter and drier[5].

In 2024, the Viticulture and Wine Sector Working Group recommended greater support for winegrape growers to diversify their farming enterprises, develop alternate products or move to non-traditional revenue streams by providing information and support services[6].

The Inland Grower Revenue Options (I-GRO) Project was initiated in December 2024 to address this need. The I-GRO Project has developed a suite of diversification support materials to help winegrape growers identify and analyse alternate farm revenue streams to improve long-term business viability. The materials were developed in consultation with inland region winegrape growers, their industry associations, a wide range of service providers, and other stakeholders.



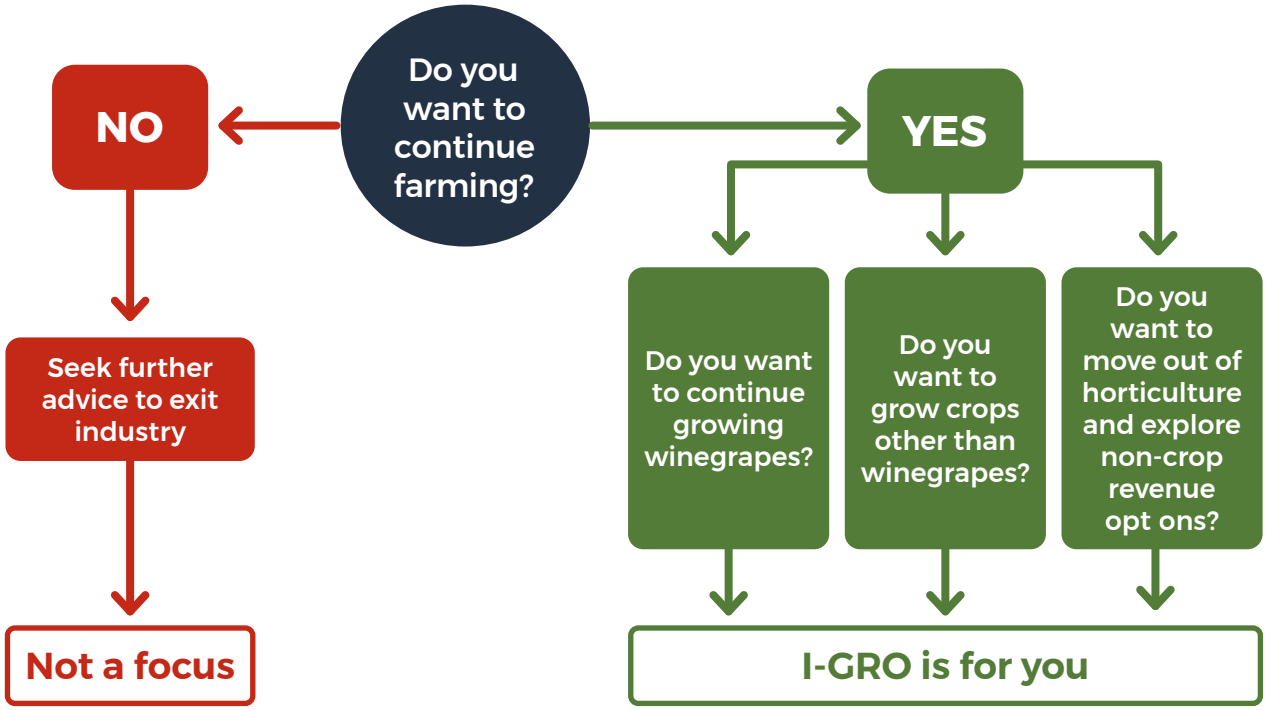
[1] Wine Australia (2024) National Vintage Report.
www.wineaustralia.com/getmedia/b3576546-f5b7-4210-b936-0460b618bd41/MI_VintageReport2024_F.pdf
[2] Puga, G. and Anderson, K. (2024) The influence of climate on varietal similarities across countries.
acsess.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/ael2.70001
[3] Wine Australia (2025) Australian wine production, sales and inventory 2024–25, November,
www.wineaustralia.com/market-insights/australian-wine-production-sales-and-inventory
[4] Wine Australia (2024) Australian Wine Market Insights Report.
www.wineaustralia.com/getmedia/464497fe-db24-47de-b217-4e2d20c89a21/Australia-market-insights-report-2024_v2.pdf
[5] Harris, R. et al. (2019) Climate Atlas: Australia's Wine Future.
www.wineaustralia.com/growing-making/environment-and-climate/climate-atlas
[6] Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (2024) Viticulture and Wine Sector Working Group Final Report
www.agriculture.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/viticulture-wine-sector-working-group-report.pdf

Who should use I-GRO?

The core focus for the I-GRO Project is growers who want to continue deriving income from their farm businesses. While there is evidence that some regions are undergoing structural contraction, and some growers may leave farming during this time, the I-GRO Project is primarily focused on supporting growers who will continue as producers.

The financial and water position of individual farm businesses will have a significant influence on the diversification process and what alternative revenue options may be feasible. It is important to consider these factors early.

Figure A Where do growers see themselves in 5–10 years' time? Defining the I-GRO target audience





What is available?

The I-GRO Discussion Tool is for service providers to work with inland winegrape growers in the Murray Valley, Riverina and Riverland to identify viable diversification options and develop a Farm Diversification Plan for the grower.

Decisions to diversify a farm business need to be made carefully and over time; it is anticipated a grower might spend 4-6 months working with trusted service providers to identify and plan their diversification strategy.

Service providers include: rural financial counsellors, industry development officers, accountants, extension officers, agronomists, rural bankers and others.

The I-GRO Grower Workbook is a companion to the Discussion Tool for winegrape growers to complete with the support of service providers. The **I-GRO Grower Workbook is available online to download separately.**

Each winegrape grower differs in their desired lifestyle, goals, strengths, risk tolerance and the current market position of their farm business. Service providers can use the I-GRO Discussion Tool to structure a series of conversations with growers, and to identify the parts of the Grower Workbook most relevant to the grower in planning their future farm.

The Discussion Tool and Grower Workbook offer an extensive bank of information, tools, templates, questions and checklists to help growers and their service providers:

- Identify the grower's personal future aspirations
- Analyse the current farm business
- Identify and analyse future revenue options for improved farm viability
- Choose a preferred option
- Develop a business plan to test the preferred option, and potentially access finance
- Map how to transition the farm from its current state, to its future state.

It is important to note that inland winegrape growers will get the best outcome by stepping through the I-GRO Grower Workbook with a service provider who uses the I-GRO Discussion Tool to support the activities.

Disclaimer

The Tool and Workbook were finalised in June 2026. Please be aware that some market and financial information changes rapidly, so these parts of the documents may become out of date. Please treat that information accordingly.

The Tool and Workbook provide general information, not financial advice. For financial advice, check your information with a qualified person like your accountant or financial planner.

Why might growers diversify?

Diversification can build resilience and future-proof farms financially, environmentally and socially.

To maximise profit from diversification, a grower needs to assess establishment costs, how many years until full yield, and potential impact of likely risks (e.g. market saturation, crop failure, impact of extreme weather events or key equipment failure). In practice, financial returns are often also shaped by external variables like water pricing, technological advancements, export avenues, competition from imports, and a range of government policies[7].

Additionally, psychological factors, including a grower's lifestyle goals, family dynamics, risk tolerance, past experiences and self-confidence, can all play a role in shaping decisions[8]. Many growers also consider long-term sustainability, their community responsibilities, connection to identity or place, and environmental stewardship.

This means that the process for winegrape growers deciding the 'why, how and what' of diversification may be complex. The growers being supported by this Discussion Tool will ultimately develop a Farm Diversification Plan that meets their own specific financial goals, matches their current emotional capacity, and supports the grower's broader social and cultural identity.

[7] Lambin, E. F., Turner, B. L., Geist, H. J., et al. (2001) Theories of land-use and land-cover change: A multidisciplinary approach.
[8] McFadden, D. (2001). Econometric models of choice and discrimination. Handbook of Econometrics.

How to use the Discussion Tool and Grower Workbook

What is the purpose of the Discussion Tool?

A conversation about diversification should be paced out and often takes months. The Discussion Tool offers you as the service provider ideas about what questions to ask and in what order. These include the key questions growers should be asking of themselves, other service providers, supply chain contractors, and potential markets or buyers.

A trusted service provider can support their grower with guidance and accountability, pacing the tasks out, referring growers to additional support or information where the Discussion Tool and the service provider do not have the requisite information. The service provider can also encourage the grower to seek mental health support and comfort at times that the conversation becomes difficult.

This Discussion Tool is structured to how growers learn best, where information is:

- **Relevant** to their farm and their lifestyle objectives
- Based on **real-life examples** and experience
- **Self-directed** and delivered at the **right time**
- **Tailored** to what the grower is trying to achieve
- Supported by **respected peers**
- **Revisited, reviewed and revised** with new knowledge and insights.

The intent of the I-GRO Discussion Tool is that trusted service providers will use the Tool to support individual winegrape growers to work through the parts of the Grower Workbook most relevant to their farm business.

This Discussion Tool is not about service providers identifying or recommending crop options to growers. It is about supporting growers through structured and economically grounded decision-making, to restructure and reposition their farm business.

Most growers already have ideas about what they might want to try or do differently. Working with a service provider using the Discussion Tool allows growers to thoroughly test which options are most feasible.



What is the purpose of the Grower Workbook?

The **I-GRO Grower Workbook** is a stand-alone document for growers to use as they collect information and think through their options. The Workbook is intentionally light on text and theory – service providers are encouraged to talk through the Workbook with growers, using the information and prompts in this Discussion Tool.

The Workbook is divided into modules. So as not to overwhelm the grower, the service provider can decide which modules to give to the grower to complete. The modules of the Workbook can be downloaded as editable PDFs, so growers can work electronically, if preferred. The Workbook can also be downloaded in its entirety and printed.

Links between sections in the Discussion Tool and the Grower Workbook are included throughout the remainder of this document via page number referencing.

Ideally, the Grower Workbook will be a 'living document' that the grower can refer to and revise during their farm transition process. As is clear from later sections of this Tool, agribusiness lenders take great comfort in seeing that growers are making considered decisions based on well-documented analysis and thought.

Guide on a page

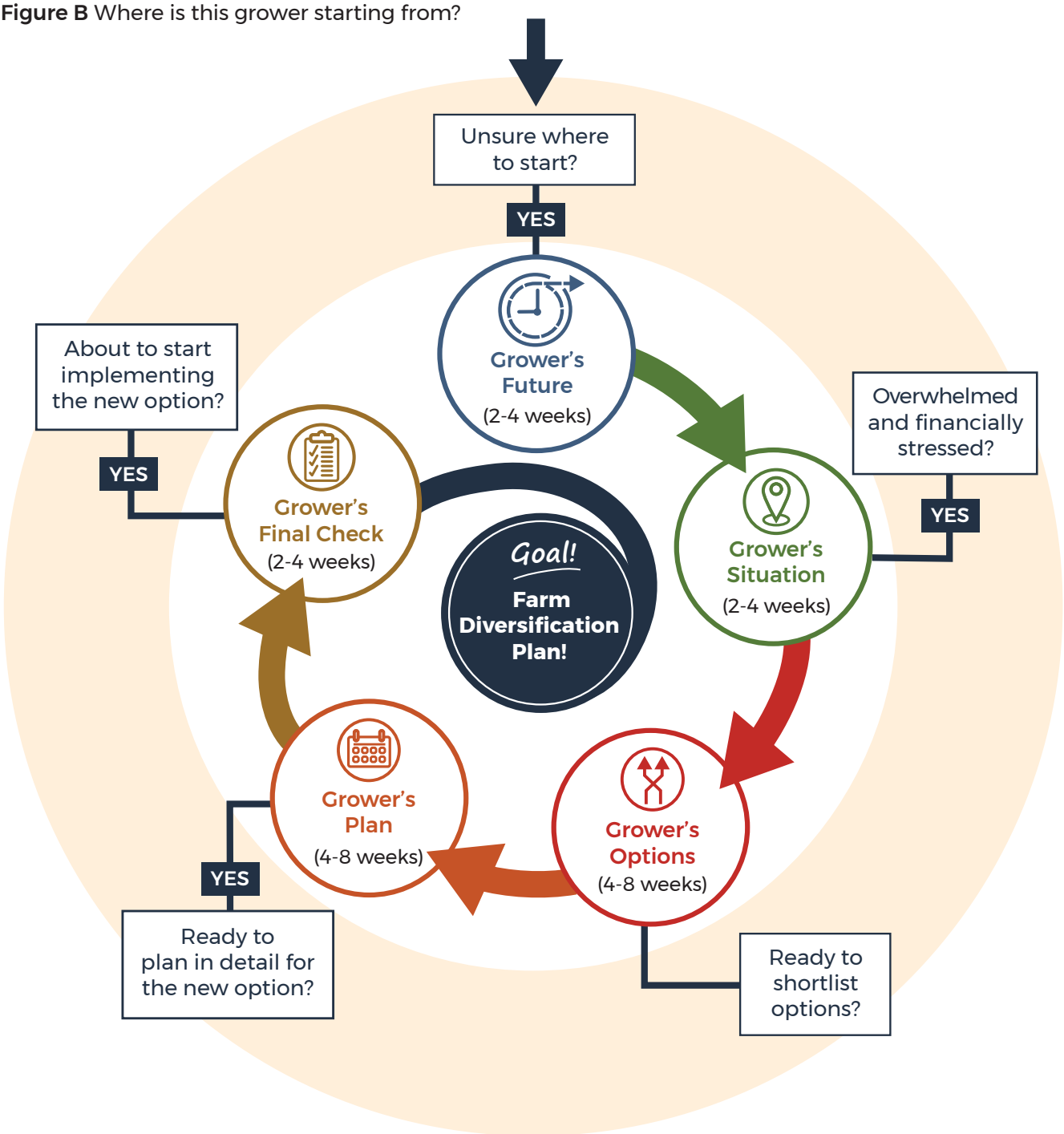
Grower Workbook Section	What the service provider does (Discussion Tool)	What the grower does (Grower Workbook) and ends up with	Typical timeframe
 **My Future** What do I want from farming and life?	• Guides discussion on goals, lifestyle and risk • Tests assumptions and trade-offs	• Clarifies goals and priorities • Records Future Vision and Goals	2–4 weeks
 **My Situation** What does my farm business currently offer?	• Helps audit farm capacity, finances and water position • Brings in specialist advice as needed	• Maps farm assets and constraints • Completes Farm Capacity, Financial Health checklists	2–4 weeks
 **My Options** What realistic alternatives are worth testing?	• Supports shortlisting and comparison of options, including market and pathway analysis	• Identifies and tests options • Develops shortlist of preferred options and does Option Analysis	4–8 weeks
 **My Plan** What is the best way forward, and how will I get there?	• Shapes a practical plan (optional support for business case development)	• Selects preferred option • Builds Farm Diversification Plan and My Pathway (plan on a page)	4–8 weeks
 **My Final Check** Does the plan stack up, and what support is needed next and ongoing?	• Tests plan, including checking for risks and gaps • Encourages access to ongoing support	• Refines plan and next steps • Finalises Farm Diversification Plan, and plans for periodic review and support options • Prints out My Pathway poster as ongoing guide	2–4 weeks (ongoing)

How is the tool structured?

Figure B asks service providers and growers to identify where the grower is starting from and suggests the best place in the Discussion Tool for the service provider and grower to begin the discussion.

The process of using the Discussion Tool can start at any of the sections, but ideally growers will move back and forth between all the parts of the Discussion Tool and Workbook, as they develop clarity and check their assumptions and aspirations.

Figure B Where is this grower starting from?



The sections that follow are a guide for your discussions with winegrape growers about how they might adapt their farms to achieve greater long-term viability. The sections have embedded hyperlinks to relevant parts of the I-GRO Grower Workbook which can be downloaded separately.

As a service provider, you can pick and choose the templates and checklists best suited to the grower's stage of decision-making. All five modules of the Grower Workbook can be printed and handed to your grower, or can be downloaded as editable PDFs for growers who prefer electronic copies.

Throughout the Discussion Tool and Workbook, there are coloured tabs that link to the relevant activity and section in each document, allowing for ease of navigation. Each section is also colour coded with relevant symbols.

Discussion Tool Section	Grower Workbook link	Approximate time to complete section
Grower's Future	Grower Workbook Section 1 | Page 8	2-4 weeks
Grower's Situation	Grower Workbook Section 2 | Page 13	2-4 weeks
Grower's Options	Grower Workbook Section 3 | Page 23	4-8 weeks
Grower's Plan	Grower Workbook Section 4 | Page 32	4-8 weeks
Grower's Final Check	Grower Workbook Section 5 | Page 46	2-4 weeks



Decision-making is **iterative** and each cycle of review improves the outcome

Ideally, encourage the grower to start by thinking where they want to be in 5-10 years (**My Future Section 1**), with a strong focus on quality of life and personal goals. Getting clear on this longer-term aspiration is fundamental to filtering out options and should not be omitted.

Grower Workbook
Section 1 | Page 8

The next section supports the grower to catalogue their current farm, water and financial position (**My Situation Section 2**). This may be clearer for growers who have already sought support due to financial stress, but for those looking to diversify, it is worth considering some of the broader questions around farm assets and advantages.

Grower Workbook
Section 2 | Page 13

You and the grower can then shortlist several potential alternate revenue options (crop and non-crop) that align with the grower's preferred future and current situation (**My Options Section 3**). Within the My Options section, there is guidance for the grower to 'test' the likely success of options to reduce the shortlist and find their best option.

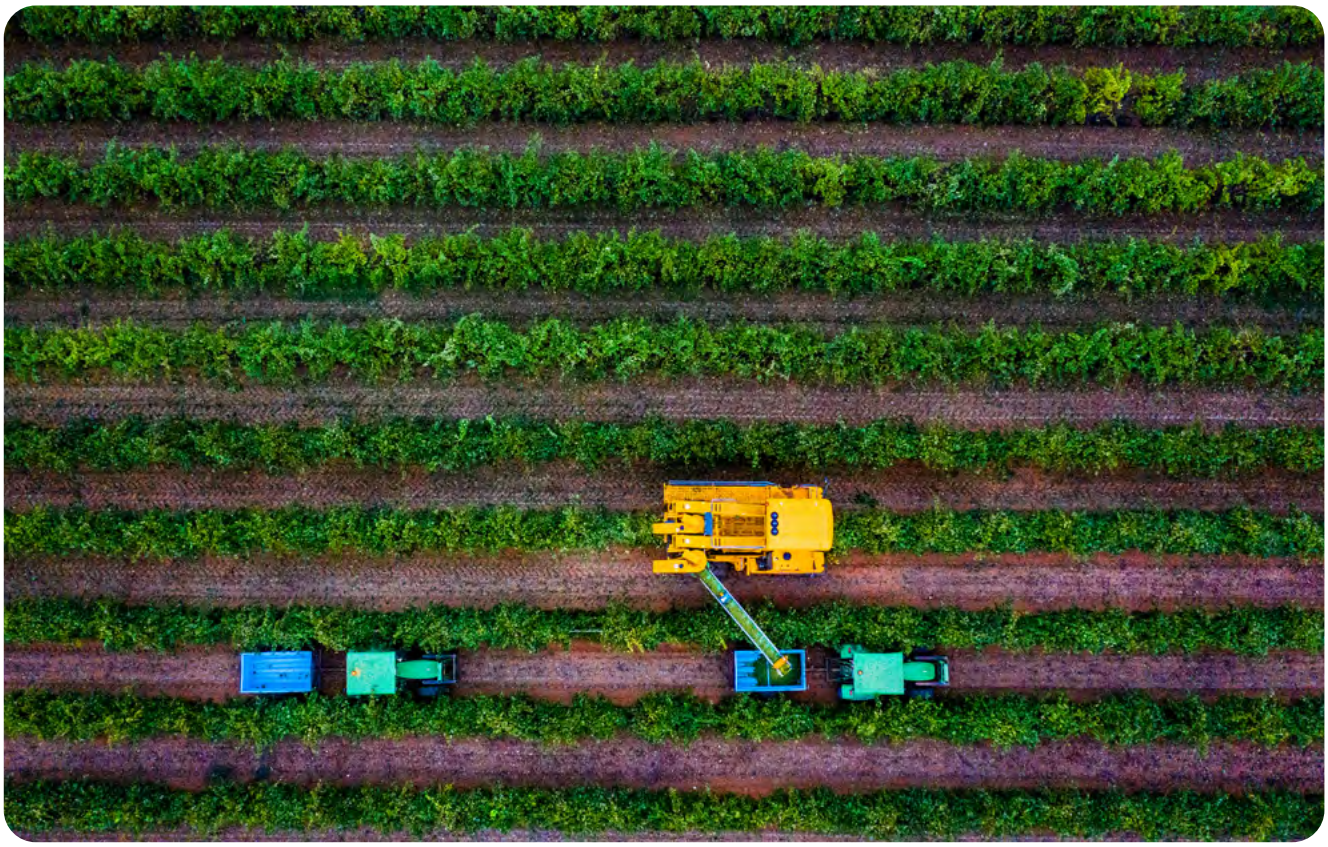
Grower Workbook
Section 3 | Page 23

Once a grower has identified their best option, the Discussion Tool shows how to develop a Farm Diversification Plan to guide the coming five or so years. Information is provided on how a grower might build a Business Case for borrowing, if the preferred diversification option requires up-front investment beyond the farm's current financial capacity (**My Plan Section 4**).

Grower Workbook
Section 4 | Page 32

The final part of the Discussion Tool offers a set of useful prompts to help the grower and service provider stress test the plan to improve the likelihood of success (**Final Check Section 5**).

Grower Workbook
Section 5 | Page 46



1 Grower's Future

1.1 Why consider diversification 11
Context and key considerations

1.2 Why work with a service provider? 12
Grower needs

1.3 What if I want to exit? 13
Types of service provider

1.4 What if I want to keep growing winegrapes? 13
Good to compare winegrapes with other options

1.5 My future - questions 14
Prompting questions and how this section links to the remaining content and Workbook

Overview
The conversations this Tool will support are likely to take place over a 4-to-6-month period, as you work with the winegrape grower to steadily and carefully consider the best future farm to fit their aspirations and situation.

At any time during the process, a grower may conclude that their best option is to exit farming. The deliberate thinking and conversation leading up to that point will be valuable to a grower because they will be sure the decision to exit is well-founded, and they will have a strong understanding of what their farm asset offers.

"Exit is a form of transition, not failure."

(Grower)

Growers who want to exit farming are encouraged to turn directly to **Final Check (Section 5.6)** for information about support services and schemes for getting off the land.

1.1 Why consider diversification?

The current context for inland winegrape growers continues to be challenging:

- **Several years of low returns and cashflow pressure** mean growers need to stem the losses and identify viable alternative options.
- **Oversupply of red wine**, particularly Shiraz and Cabernet Sauvignon. Approximately 70%[9] of Australia's wine is grown in inland regions, and over 60% of its plantings are red varieties[10].
- **Reduced demand** as consumers drink less wine, contributing to increased wine inventory and stock to sales ratio. This is particularly pronounced with **white wine**[11].
- Shifts in **global wine markets**, including recent trade bans and declining value, highlighting the vulnerability of the region's bulk wine production[12].
- **Constrained water supply** from an over-allocated Murray-Darling Basin system. Water costs are projected to rise as the market shifts to higher value perennial crops.
- **Global supply chain disruption** with impacts on the cost and availability of inputs (e.g. diesel fuel, fertilisers).
- **Increasing seasonal variability and extreme weather events** (e.g. hail, flooding, heatwave, out-of-season frost). These regions are among the 'top ten' for change in Growing Degree Days, Rainfall, Aridity; the regions are becoming hotter and drier[13].

Diversification can build resilience and future-proof farms financially, environmentally and socially.

To make a good diversification decision, a grower needs to assess:

- establishment costs,
- years until peak profit/yield, and
- potential impact of likely risks (e.g. market saturation, crop failure, impact of extreme weather events or key equipment failure).

In practice, financial returns are often also shaped by external variables including:

- technological advancements,
- export avenues,
- competition from imports, and
- a range of government policies[14].

Also, psychological and personal factors play a role in shaping decisions[15], like:

- lifestyle goals and family dynamics,
- risk tolerance,
- past experiences and self-confidence,
- community responsibilities,
- connection to identity or place, and
- environmental stewardship.

The process is about personal capacity, goals and readiness, as much as it is about farm financial viability.

[9] Wine Australia (2024) National Vintage Report. www.wineaustralia.com/getmedia/b3576546-f5b7-4210-b936-0460b618bd41/MI_VintageReport2024_F.pdf
[10] Puga, G. and Anderson, K. (2024) The influence of climate on varietal similarities across countries. acsess.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/ael2.70001
[11] Wine Australia (2025) Australian wine production, sales and inventory 2024–25, November, www.wineaustralia.com/market-insights/australian-wine-production-sales-and-inventory
[12] Wine Australia (2024) Australian Wine Market Insights Report. www.wineaustralia.com/getmedia/464497fe-db24-47de-b217-4e2d20c89a21/Australia-market-insights-report-2024_v2.pdf
[13] Harris, R. et al. (2019) Climate Atlas: Australia's Wine Future. www.wineaustralia.com/growing-making/environment-and-climate/climate-atlas
[14] Lambin, E. F., Turner, B. L., Geist, H. J., et al. (2001) Theories of land-use and land-cover change: A multidisciplinary approach.
[15] McFadden, D. (2001). Econometric models of choice and discrimination. Handbook of Econometrics.

Deciding to change can create psychological distress, so service providers and growers are encouraged to keep grower mental health front of mind throughout the discussion process. Counselling or mental health support might also be needed by the grower's family members, particularly where a spouse has weathered the challenges of family farming, where there are shared assets or debt, or where family succession is part of the decision about the future of the farm.

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT TAILORED TO GROWERS

It is important for growers to seek additional support to talk through anxiety, stress and the pressures they may experience.

There are many resources and supports available such as Rural Aid, ifarmwell, and the National Centre for Farmer Health. Encourage the grower to talk to people they trust if they need a hand.

Growers using this process will develop a Farm Diversification Plan to match their life aspirations and financial goals and supports the grower's broader identity.

Grower Workbook Section 4.4 | Page 43

"Phone a friend."

- Catch phrase from *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?*

1.2 Why work with a service provider?

Diversification decisions rely on a mixture of knowledge types – about farming, markets, and business. Few growers have high-level skills across all three of these knowledge types, particularly when it comes to farming a crop they are not familiar with.

Given this, and the stress facing many inland winegrape growers, most growers need trusted service providers to support them in a rigorous process of decision-making. The role of the service provider is to guide the conversation, not provide answers.

Trusted agronomists, leading local growers, accountants and financial counsellors, grower groups and mental health services, can support grower decision-making. Decisions to change farming practice are not generally made 'on the spot'. The grower needs to 'do their homework' to improve the chance that the cost and risk of making a change is likely to pay off. Conversations about farm finance can also be difficult and cause distress; these conversations require adequate wrap-around support.

Growers deciding to fundamentally change their farm business often need:

- Several/ongoing conversations with people they trust
- Ample thinking time
- Various kinds of support – information, emotional support, encouragement, accountability
- To consider more than one potential option
- To see options 'in action', for example at a neighbouring farm or trial site
- To crunch the numbers
- A sensible, practical plan to take the farm from 'where it is now' to 'where it needs to be'.

Using the I-GRO Discussion Tool, service providers have an essential role in supporting the above steps. The service providers' role is to walk alongside the grower as they work through the options and consider all the pros and cons of making change to a more stable farm structure.

1.3 What if the grower wants to exit?

This Tool supports winegrape growers who want to think thoroughly about their options to continue farming. For some growers, a deep look at their situation and aspirations might lead to the conclusion that the best option is to exit.

For growers who decide to leave farming, or are restructuring their farm business to sell it, information is included in **Want to Exit (Section 5.6)**. Service providers can be very beneficial to growers who have decided to exit. Examples include:

1. Rural financial counsellor (to clarify options, identify supports, and who to contact next)
2. Community and mental-health support (to manage wellbeing)
3. Accountant (to assess likely final financial position after sale of farm)
4. Lawyer (to explain options and process for selling farm)
5. Bank (to plan financial steps, acquit outstanding loans, manage balance of funds)
6. Land valuer and real estate agent (to price farm, advertise, and sell or lease land)
7. Water corporation or trust representative (to sell or rescind water rights).



1.4 What if the grower wants to keep winegrapes?

This Discussion Tool can support growers who want to 'crunch the numbers' on continuing to grow winegrapes as one of their preferred options. Undertaking a 'like for like' comparison of the business case to continue with the same farm, up against alternative options, can be a valuable exercise as growers consider their farm future.

The Discussion Tool can also be used with growers who want to rationalise and 'futureproof' their blocks of winegrapes by analysing the prospects of the varieties they grow - which varieties might have greater climate resilience or marketability in the longer term, as winegrape supply in Australia stabilises. Local grower groups, expert commentary[17], and Wine Australia's market insights[18] and Climate Atlas[19] are useful starting points for growers thinking about futureproofing. Several other options associated with continuing to grow winegrapes are included in **Potential options in the region (Section 3.1)**.

[17] Dry and Smart (2022) Varietal Choice for a Warmer Future www.awri.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/s2314-Varietal-choice.pdf
[18] Wine Australia Market Insights (2026), www.wineaustralia.com/market-insights
[19] Remenyi et al (2019) Australia's Wine Future – a Climate Atlas www.wineaustralia.com/growing-making/environment-and-climate/climate-atlas

"Fit your own mask before assisting others."

(Airline safety advice)

1.5 My future – questions

What the grower wants from their day-to-day working life is the fundamental base from which to decide the future shape of their farm business. Having a future vision that fits with goals in life is motivating; it will help growers find the energy and commitment to pursue change. It also helps the grower think outside the usual focus of making the farm work in its current state.

A good starting question for a grower is:

Where do you see yourself in 5-10 years?

Once you've established the grower is intending to continue farming, the Grower Workbook has a set of follow-on questions in **Section 1.1 Future vision and goals** to allow you and the grower to add details of their preferred future life.

Grower Workbook
Section 1.1 | Page 9

These include questions like:

- Where would you like to be living? On the farm or elsewhere?
- Do you see yourself 'on the tools' or more 'in the office/organising things'?
- What else will you want to be doing with your time, apart from farming?

The grower's answers in the My Future templates of the Grower Workbook can be used as an important review or filter for each section of the Discussion Tool. For example:

- **My Situation (Section 2)** – once a grower has developed clarity on their current farm capacity and financial and water situation, revisiting their vision for a future farming life can help identify which aspirations might be achievable and which ones might need adjusting or take more time to deliver.
- **My Options (Section 3)** – answers about My Future help understand the day-to-day routines and activities that the grower aspires to achieve. For example, a grower who prefers not to find and manage labour might aim for crops that can be machine-harvested. A grower who wants to spend three months a year fishing is best to look at options that allow blocks of time off farm (e.g. perennial/seasonal crop options).
- **My Plan (Section 4)** – by keeping answers to My Future front of mind in developing a Farm Diversification Plan, a grower can avoid developing and committing to a plan that is technically and financially sound but fails to deliver on their ideas about what matters most personally.

All the work the grower does with you, the service provider, will feed into their overall Farm Diversification Plan and overarching strategic plan on a page: **My Pathway**.

Grower Workbook
Section 4.4 | Page 43

2 Grower's Situation

2.1 Farm capacity 17

- Resource advantages
- Compatibility checks
- Trialling
- Assessing complexity
- Observation and learning
- Risk analysis

2.2 Financial position 18

- Importance of a strong financial position

2.3 Water access 19

- Reliability of entitlement
- Exposure to temporary water market
- Sensitivity of current farm enterprise to water stress or timing of irrigation
- Water cost predictions
- Water use efficiency
- Opportunity cost
- Scalability

Overview

There are many steps in making a decision to diversify farm revenue sources. These include:

- Making an inventory of current **farm capacity**, including natural or acquired assets (soil, water); built assets and equipment; farm location/proximity to markets; access to information and networks; farm's human assets (skills, energy, knowledge, experience)
- Assessing the current **farm financial position**, including debt levels, equity position, cash flow, and the ability of the business to service current and future borrowing.

In the Grower Workbook there are templates and checklists to support growers to evaluate their situation. This section is critical to determine what might be realistic in terms of future options and can help growers eliminate impractical options early.

The templates in this section of the Grower Workbook are comprehensive and may feel overwhelming for growers, so are best used interactively with service providers. As a service provider, it is worth staging the work of farm capacity and financial situation analysis over several weeks or sessions.

A service provider might also encourage growers to access specific expertise during the process of analysing farm capacity (e.g. agronomist, soil scientist, equipment suppliers), financial position (e.g. accountant, financial planner, existing lender), and water access (e.g. water corporation or trust, irrigation expertise, agriculture department).

There is no 'right' place to start a grower clarifying their situation, but Table 2.0 suggests some of the scenarios where growers might find this challenging and need concentrated encouragement and support from you or by referral to other specialist service providers.

Table 2.0 Areas a grower might find challenging and need support

Workbook section	Support grower here if...	How long might it take to complete?	Who could help?
2.1 Mapping your current situation (page 14)	They have a complex farm setup, or poorly documented systems, or are new to farming...	2-3 weeks	Agronomists, equipment suppliers, soil scientist, agriculture department
2.2 Understanding your numbers (page 19)	They are avoidant or overly concerned about their finances...	3-5 weeks	Accountant, lender
2.1.1 Farm Capacity Checklist (page 14)	They appear to be highly water constrained or are highly exposed to the temporary water market...	1 week	Water corporation or trust, accountant, irrigation specialist, agriculture department

My Options (Section 3) and **My Plan (Section 4)** include questions that revisit the Farm Capacity and Financial Position templates in the Grower Workbook. Completing these templates means growers and their service providers can develop a clear picture of the farm's physical advantages or assets – and critically the current financial and water status – as starting points for identifying realistic options.

This information is also valuable when assessing new option compatibility with current farming setup, sketching out and planning for complexity, making good use of resource advantages, and taking a helicopter view of whole farm risks[22].

[22] Agriculture Victoria (2025) Farm Diversification Decision-Making. agriculture.vic.gov.au/farm-management/business-management/new-landholders/farm-diversification-decisionmaking

2.1 Farm capacity

The Farm Capacity Checklist in the Grower Workbook provides key questions to help growers select the best options for diversification. A clear assessment of farm capacity helps guide decision-making by identifying the strengths, constraints and development potential of the existing enterprise. The following key points are worth keeping in mind when assessing current farm capacity and planning diversification:

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For example:

- **Resource advantages** – enterprises tend to succeed when they have an edge over competitor producers such as soil, water, proximity to market, infrastructure or human capital. Assessing the 'edge' that each farm already has can help guide diversification choices.
- **Compatibility checks** – assess if a new enterprise aligns with existing systems, skills, infrastructure, labour availability and vision for future farming work/life (from My Future).
- **Trialling** cultivation and harvest – checking where on the current farm a small scale trial could be undertaken. Trials reduce the risk of choosing a crop or option that won't suit the farm or grower, and helps refine choices (e.g. genetics, systems), production and harvest (e.g. grading, packing) and marketing (e.g. establish relationship with agents, buyers), before scaling up.
- **Assessing complexity** – as complexity increases, so does risk; moving to a new enterprise may require new skills, systems, scale, compliance or certification. Very novel crop options may require the farm to invest in consumer education, in addition to meeting technical challenges of optimising genetics and production.
- **Observation and learning** – the opportunity to learn from neighbours' experiences increases confidence and reduces uncertainty, demonstrates agronomic feasibility in the region and also ensures infrastructure and supply chain are viable (e.g. inputs available, pathways to market established).
- **Risk analysis** – all farming (and business) decisions come with an element of risk. Clarity on current farm setup and systems is valuable to assess and cost out potential impacts of on-farm risks like pest and disease pressure/impact, potential biosecurity incursion, and yield sensitivity/variability.

The Farm Capacity Checklist is provided in the **Grower Workbook (Section 2)**, and covers:

- 'Your Farmland'
- 'Your Production'
- 'Your Farm Equipment and Infrastructure'
- 'Your Labour Needs'
- 'Your Risk Appetite and Willingness to Diversify'
- 'Your Market Pathways'.



2.2 Financial position

The Farm Financial Health Checklist in the Grower Workbook provides questions to help growers examine options for diversification that are compatible with their current debt to equity ratio, and capacity to endure the financial impacts of change.

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A service provider can help the grower understand the significance of their debt to equity ratio, and how it frames options. Depending on the stage of business establishment, a perennial horticulture business might sit between 30% and 60%. The grower's current ratio influences which options are feasible; high debt and low equity, or weak cash flow may impact the grower's ability to pursue options that are slow-to-establish or capital-intensive.

Building a strong financial position is critical for farm resilience, enabling the business to withstand seasonal variability, market fluctuations, and rising input costs. It provides the foundation for reinvestment, expansion, and diversification, and is a key determinant of lending capacity. Understanding the farm's financial health allows growers to make informed decisions about risk, capital allocation and long-term business strategy.

The Farm Financial Health Checklist is provided in the **Grower Workbook (Section 2)**, and covers:

- Your revenue and current profit
- Cash flow
- Debt-serviceability and risk
- Investment assessment

Key farming enablers are **CAPITAL** and **WATER** so understanding them shows what is and isn't possible



2.3 Water access

Water is covered in both the farm capacity and financial position templates in the Grower Workbook. Water is both a tradeable asset and a production input, but access, availability and reliability is variable. This asset needs close attention because it is a key enabler, and will strongly shape which options are feasible for a grower. For example, if the grower decides to commit water over several years for establishment of a perennial crop, versus choosing to grow annuals with the option of seasonally trading water for cash.

A grower's water position includes their 'entitlement' (long-term asset with varying reliability) and 'allocation' (the seasonal volume available to use, or trade). Allocation levels vary year-to-year depending on inflows and regulatory settings. While the base rate for entitlement water is steady, a grower who cannot access sufficient water through an entitlement may need to purchase temporary water. So, the key points are:

- Growers with a water entitlement may still need to purchase temporary water.
- Temporary water prices fluctuate and can be very high, particularly in times of drought or dry conditions.
- Growers with no water entitlement may be heavily reliant on the temporary water market.

This means two farms with similar infrastructure can have very different prospects depending on their water position. Water is often one of the most valuable assets on-farm, and decisions about how it is used, traded or retained should be considered alongside any change in enterprise.

For diversification, water should be assessed in terms of reliability, cost exposure and flexibility. Crop options that require consistent, high water use every year carry greater risk if allocations are uncertain or where growers rely on the temporary market. Conversely, options that use less water, or are resilient to irrigation being scaled up or down, may be a better choice for growers reliant on temporary water.

Service providers can help growers catalogue their water position by asking questions. For example about:

- Reliability of entitlement (high vs low/ general security) and historic allocation levels?
- Exposure to temporary water market (how much do they typically need to buy in?)
- Have they considered information on future cost of water under different climate and policy scenarios?
- Do they consider the opportunity cost of water each season (e.g. is it more valuable applied to an alternate crop, existing vines, or sold)?



3 Grower's Options

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- Potential options for growers who want to grow something other than winegrapes
- Ideas about increasing income from an established vineyard
- Non-crop options

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- Who will buy it?
- Can it compete profitably?
- What could affect market access or stability?
- Market saturation and glut risk
- Who can help?
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Business on a page – Business Model Canvas

3.5 How to analyse and compare options 30

Summary of options that winegrape growers could investigate further for diversification

3.1 Potential options in the region

It can be tempting to look over the fence or down the road, see what crop a neighbour seems to be doing well with and settle on that as 'a good idea'. The inland regions, including Murray Valley, Riverina and the Riverland, currently produce around 50 different crops. This means a wide variety of options the grower can probably grow on their farm.

There are **no silver bullets** but there will be a **best option** for each grower's individual situation

The grower's answers to the questions in **My Future** and **My Situation** (sections 1 and 2 in the Grower Workbook) start to narrow down what kinds of crop and non-crop options might best suit that farm and the individual grower's aspirations.

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This section provides a range of diversification options that may have potential for the inland regions. Each of these has been assessed against agronomic, economic and other criteria, and have been reviewed by various experts. These are not recommendations – there are no 'silver bullets' in farming. What suits the person next door might not be right for your grower.

The options listed here are a starting point for growers to consider. The eventual decision about 'what to grow or change' needs to be based on individual needs and thorough analysis. The eventual choice should be a good fit for the individual grower's aspirations, farm capacity, market demand, and viable pathways for product post-farmgate.

Time to change?

"The advice from the local [wine industry body] is 'go big, go boutique, or really think about where you're at. You might even need to go to something else'."

- Former CEO of RDA Riverland and Murraylands, 2023[23]

Table 3.1 lists potential options for growers who want to grow something other than winegrapes. First tier options are more viable and lower risk, while second tier options are worth consideration but may be higher risk. Each first tier option has regional suitability indicated (RL=Riverland; MV=Murray Valley; RA=Riverina).

Table 3.2 has ideas about increasing income from an established vineyard.

Table 3.3 lists a range of non-crop options.



[23] ABC News Online (2023) Wine grape industry backed by Riverland stakeholders calls for more farmer support. www.abc.net.au/news/rural/2023-07-06/riverland-wine-struggle-spills-over/102566270

Table 3.1 Revenue options that are not winegrapes

Indicative regional suitability RL = Riverland; MV = Murray Valley; RA = Riverina

TRELLIS	TREE	ANNUAL	BUSH/SHRUB
First tier options			
Dried vine fruit RL MV	Citrus (est. varieties) MV RA	Pumpkin RL MV RA	Globe artichoke MV RA
Figs RL MV RA	Pistachio RL MV RA	Melon RL MV RA	Asparagus MV RA
Table grape MV RA	Olives RL	Eggplant RL MV RA	Agave RA
Passionfruit RA	Carob RL	Tomato, capsicum, chilli RL MV RA	Cut flowers (native) RL MV RA
Kiwifruit MV	Prunes MV	Winter vegetables (brassica) MV RA	Finger limes MV RA
	Jujubes RL RA	Coriander seed RA	Quandong RL
	Date RL MV	Garlic MV	
Second tier options (worth consideration, but may be greater risk)			
Blackberry/ brambles	Moringa	Quinoa	Blueberries
Okra	Desert rosewood	Sesame	Desert lime
	Pecans	Chickpeas	Agave
	Pomegranate		
	Walnut		

Notes:

1. Many perennial options require 3-7 years to generate income, some may require higher water allocation than winegrapes, and some will require substantial change to row spacing, equipment or infrastructure.
2. Some options are niche or emerging, and these may risk market saturation or difficulty finding buyers if planting expands faster than the industry develops.
3. Annual crops may be a long-term option, or may be used to provide cash flow during establishment of a new perennial crop.
4. The use of protected cropping for high-value annuals (e.g. tomato, chilli, eggplant) would add to establishment costs but might be offset by saving inputs, reduced impact of extreme events, and extension of growing season.
5. Crops native to Australia may hold cultural and intellectual significance to Indigenous Australians. Growers should seek information about responsibilities for Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP)[24].
6. Factsheets are available for converting from winegrapes to olives[25], agave[26], citrus, protected cropping.

[24] National Farmer's Federation (2024) Indigenous Agricultural Product Framework, nff.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Appendix-A-Terri-Janke-Co-Report-on-Indigenous-Agricultural-Regulatory-and-Best-Practice-Frameworks.pdf
[25] CCW Co-operative Limited (2025) Converting from winegrapes to olives www.ccwcoop.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Converting-vineyards-to-olives-2025-CCW-PIRSA-factsheet.pdf
[26] CCW Co-operative (2025) Converting from winegrapes to agave www.ccwcoop.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Incorporating-Agave-into-SA-Riverland-Farms.pdf

Table 3.2 Revenue options with potential to supplement winegrapes

WINEGRAPES	VINEYARD OPTIMISATION	MARC VALORISTATION (ASSUMING A WINERY)	VALUE-ADD JUICE OR WINE
Reduce area of reds, increase area of whites	Mothball low-performing blocks and trade water saved from those blocks	Tartaric acid	Grape juice/concentrate
Alternate variety white	Renovate existing vines (e.g. topwork for new variety, cultivar or clone)	Tannin	Vegan honey/grape jelly
Alternate variety red	Optimise irrigation practices, improve water efficiency	Grape seed oil	Vinegar
Build wine brand (premiumisation)	Cover cropping to reduce inputs, or mid-row cropping for revenue	Grape spirit	Orange wine
Review contract arrangement with winery	Adjust row spacing/ trellising	Anthocyanins	Yeast lees-derived food additives
Join or form a co-operative	Sustainable Winegrowing Australia or Organic certification	Steam distilled stock feed	Vermouth
	Edible vine leaves		Low alcohol wine
			Wine fractionation



Notes:

1. Winegrapes mothballed by heavy winter pruning and deficit irrigation provide a 'water saving' that may allow a grower to sell excess water allocation, or avoid buying water if reliant on the temporary market.
2. For some growers, improving or rationalising some of the existing vineyard may be a lower risk step than adding a new crop or non-crop option to the farm.
3. Value-add wine options are only relevant to growers who have a winery, or have winemaking arrangements.
4. Certification is unlikely to increase returns on its own, but it may help keep existing buyers or access new ones. Some wineries prefer or require sustainability certification, and organic certification may suit growers targeting niche markets.

Table 3.3 Other revenue ideas for growers

ALTERNATE INCOME STREAM	MONETISE NATURAL CAPITAL	OTHER NON-CROP ENTERPRISES/IDEAS
Lease or trade water entitlement	Nature-based markets (e.g. biodiversity credits, nature repair markets)	Develop co-operative or collaborative farming (increase farm size/scale, share equipment)
Additional off-farm work or contracting	Carbon farming – trading in Australian Carbon Credit Units (ACCUs)	Develop value-add for local seconds or waste products (e.g. citrus oil, almond hull feed)
Lease out farm	Host renewable energy generation infrastructure	Aquaculture (e.g. Murray cod, yabbies, Spirulina)
Agritourism on-farm		

Notes:

1. Capital intensive options may be difficult to justify to a lender when payback period is uncertain (e.g. aquaculture, agritourism, seconds processing).
2. Carbon returns may be marginal in low rainfall conditions/regions, potentially viable if stacked with nature-based markets and mechanisms[27].
3. Some options may be more viable at a regional scale where volume, infrastructure and coordination can be aggregated, rather than as stand-alone farm enterprises.
4. A factsheet is available on leasing out the farm and the Sprout Land Access Toolkit[28] has useful resources.



[27] Pham-Kieu et al (2025) Stacking Interventions Enhances Carbon Removals and Profitability of Livestock Production Systems advanced.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/advs.202503382
[28] Sprout Tasmania (2023) Land Access Toolkit www.sprout.org.au/the-land-access-toolkit

"When the world zigs, zag."

- Attributed to Barbara Noakes (1982)

3.2 Market analysis

In the past, decisions about what to grow on a farm were often more production-led (*What can I grow?*) than market-led (*What will I be able to sell?*). Farms often grow what they have always grown, or crops that are familiar and widely grown in the local area.

Now, input costs have increased and margins are tight. Many growers are competing in a corporatised environment with some substantial players dominant in many markets. This means it is a good idea to take a long hard look at the market before settling on a particular crop or strategy for diversifying farm income.

There is a range of key questions to ask and attempt to answer, to be confident that the diversification strategy will land the farm in a more secure, stable, lucrative or reliable revenue position. In simple terms, the three main questions are:

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Who will buy it?

The grower needs to identify the target buyer/s and what drives their decision to buy a product. This might include: price, quality, provenance, reliability of supply or consumer trends. It is wise to check if demand for the product is growing, steady, or declining.

Ideally, the grower is looking for real, lasting 'market pull' rather than a short-term opportunity. Market pull means genuine ongoing demand for the product among the target buyer group, rather than the grower or agent trying to create demand for the product among buyers via marketing, special deals or price cutting.

Can it compete profitably?

Develop a clear idea of realistic/likely prices beyond the farm gate, and assess what portion usually returns to the grower. It can be useful to compare competitors' costs (if those are available) and test various margins against likely yield, quality grades, and price variations to ensure the enterprise can remain profitable with fluctuations over time.

Running the numbers using a range of assumptions about yield and return (best case, worst case) is a form of 'sensitivity testing' to work out how tight the likely margins are and hence how risky or robust a particular option might be.

What could affect market access or stability?

The grower needs to consider external factors that could shape success. These can include competition from imports, regulation, trade barriers, competition into export markets, shifting consumer preferences, or input/supply fluctuations.

Winegrape growers are very aware of how each of these factors impacts markets for winegrapes (e.g. Chinese tariffs applied to Australian wine in 2020, decline in global wine consumption). Seeking to understand these risks for alternate crops helps a grower judge how secure or volatile that diversification option may be.

Market saturation and glut risk

> "[Checking] current regional signals on how many growers are already moving toward a given option is as important as individual market research."
>
> Project Advisory Group member

Agricultural markets move in cycles. Strong prices often drive expansion in plantings, which can lead to oversupply several years later – particularly for perennial crops. Growers should look beyond current prices and assess whether the industry is expanding, stabilising or contracting.

Service providers can help growers test whether an idea for a diversification from winegrapes is already widely known and being acted on. Warning signs include rapid increases in plantings, new entrants without established buyers, and reliance on a narrow or volatile market.

The aim is to confirm **who will buy the product, on what terms**, the likely saturation volume for established markets, and how prices behave in a poor year - not just a good one. Winegrape growers (like many primary producers) are often 'price takers' in that they often have to accept the price the market is offering and cannot easily set their own sale price. Asking plenty of questions now helps growers avoid becoming the tail end of a glut where their product lands in a saturated market.



Table 3.4 Questions to ask industry

WHO TO ASK	WHAT TO ASK
Processors / buyers	Volumes and prices over time? What happens in a bad year?
Industry bodies / associations	Industry expanding or contracting? Key demand drivers and risks?
Agronomists / nurseries	What is being planted locally? Is supply increasing?
Other growers	Real prices, buyers, rejection rates?
Banks / lenders	How do you view this industry's risk?
Suppliers / logistics	Are you aware of any input, processing or freight constraints?

Who can help?

The process of market analysis for a new crop option can be challenging for growers who are comfortable and familiar with their long-established production and pathway to market/buyer, like winegrapes. It is important for service providers to encourage growers to take time and seek diverse, high quality information sources.

Table 3.5 below lists various sources for market information and explains the strengths and limitations of each.

Table 3.5 Gathering market information from a range of sources to build a full picture

SOURCE	INFORMATION AVAILABLE	STRENGTHS	LIMITS / CAUTIONS
Peak industry body (for chosen crop)	Industry scale and structure, market access pathways, standards and specifications, levy-funded research and reports.	Highly crop-specific, commercially grounded, credible with banks and investors.	Quality varies between industries and information may emphasise upside over risk.
Industry processors, buyers, aggregators	Actual demand volumes, price drivers, quality specifications, contract structures, logistics requirements.	Current, real-world intelligence that tests whether a market is genuine.	Information is informal and uneven, buyers may discourage new supply if it would impact margins.
Local successful growers	Practical insights on prices, buyers, grading/ quality, timing, quality risks, establishment and scaling realities.	Highly regionally relevant and experience-based.	Growers can be cagey and insights may not transfer to new entrants/different farm set-up.
State Departments of Primary Industries	Crop suitability, regional trials, yield and gross margin ranges, market access notes, case studies.	Strong regional focus and often candid about risks.	Market analysis may be shallow, coverage/ depth varies by state.
Levy-funded Research and Development Corporations (RDCs) (e.g. Horticulture Innovation Australia; Wine Australia)	Market demand trends, consumer and retail insights, supply–demand analysis, export opportunities.	High credibility and good commercial relevance.	Best coverage/ information for established crops; some reports require levy access.
Emerging and non-levy industry RDC - AgriFutures Australia	Emerging crop profiles, value chain descriptions, market snapshots, R&D roadmaps.	Useful for diversification decisions, accessible for growers/farmers.	Coverage and currency varies by crop, data can be limited for new industries.
Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES)	Commodity outlooks, trade and export data, long-term demand trends, global market context.	Very credible, useful for testing big-picture demand.	Big picture focus – limited detail for niche crops.

"Eyes on the forest, not on the trees."

- Collins, S. (2010) The Mockingjay: Hunger Games Book 3. Scholastic Inc.

3.3 Pathway to market

Pathway to market is about the intervening part; the barriers and enablers between the farm gate and the buyer. It is also where many otherwise good ideas fall over.

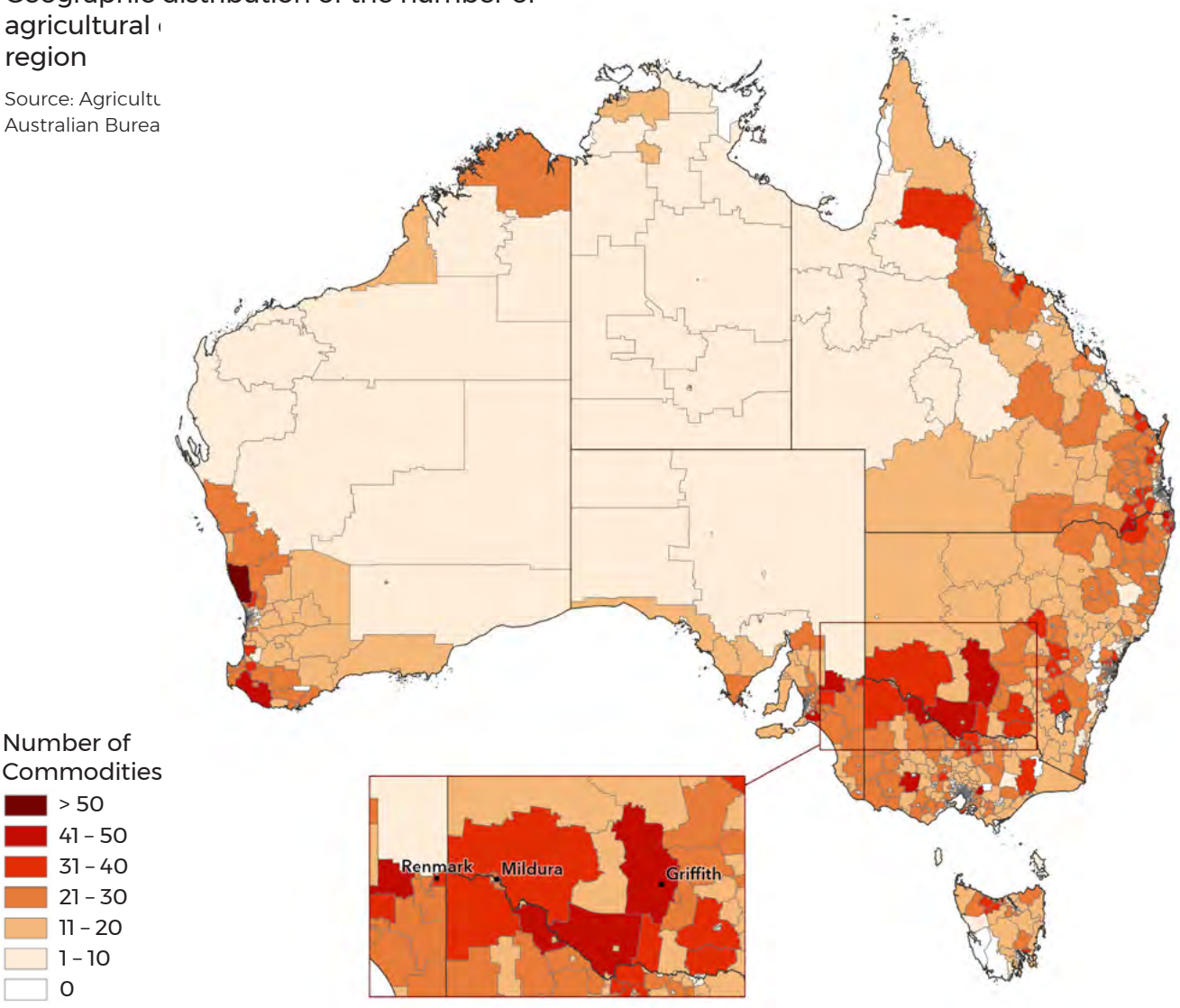
Service providers can work with the grower to map the full journey from farm gate to buyer. This is where hidden costs, bottlenecks and risks tend to sit. For their preferred options, the grower needs to assess what infrastructure exists or is needed, including physical supply channels, consumer readiness, access to agents, grading standards and options for seconds/value adding.

The Murray Valley, Riverina and Riverland regions produce approximately 50 different crops, which suggests that supply chain infrastructure and local knowledge likely exist for a wide range of alternatives to winegrapes (Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1 Inland winegrowing regions have highly diversified crop production[31]

Geographic distribution of the number of agricultural
region

Source: Agricultu
Australian Burea



[31] Lawes, R. and Herrmann, C. (2025) Diversification in Australian agriculture: a comprehensive overview. www.farminstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/LawesHerrmann-FPJ_Vol.22_No.1_2025.pdf

Below is a selection of the pathway to market factors that a grower can review for their preferred options. If a clear and viable pathway to market can't be identified, the option may be more trouble than it is worth.

- **Handling and perishability**
  Does it need cooling, grading, packing or fast turnaround? Short shelf life = higher establishment cost and risks in event of freight interruption, cool chain issues or refrigeration failure.
- **Processing access**
  Is there a local processor? What happens if capacity is full? Who gets priority?
- **Specifications and rejection**
  How tight are quality standards with the buyers the grower is targeting? What % typically misses premium grade, and what is it worth then (are there options for sale of seconds)?
- **Freight and distance**
  How far to market? What does freight cost, and are these costs variable? How time-sensitive is delivery?
- **Price setting**
  Who has the power to set the price - the grower or the buyer? Is price negotiated or taken? Is there a co-operative arrangement available locally?
- **Contracts vs. exposure**
  Secure sale but capped price/volume (contracts), or variable/potentially higher return but risky (spot market)?
- **Compliance load**
  What standards and certification apply (food safety, export, retailer requirements)? What do they cost to establish and maintain?
- **Scale and coordination**
  Can this be done at your scale, or does it rely on aggregation or partnerships? Will you be competing against established networks or big corporate interests?
- **Timing of cash**
  How long from harvest to payment, seasonally? Can the business carry the gap between costs to harvest and ship, and payment by the buyer?

3.4 Shortlist your options

At this stage, the aim is to narrow the longlist of 'things that can grow in the region' to the 4 or 5 most realistic options. Selection of options to shortlist should be based on reviewing preferred options to find ones that:

- Align with the grower's future goals in life
- Are compatible with farm capacity (including water and labour)
- Are potentially financially feasible, including the time period until they generate income
- Are not at, or approaching, glut (market prospects are strong and there is not over-planting)
- Post-farmgate systems and infrastructure are available (feasible pathway to market).

Options that don't meet these broad criteria are unlikely to be feasible, even with more detailed analysis or consideration. The following section describes a generic tool growers can use to take a 'helicopter view' of what the shortlisted new revenue options might look like in broad terms, as part of their farm business.

3.4.1 Business on a page

Before deciding on 'what' new crop or non-crop option to test with the grower for their farm diversification, it is useful to start them thinking about the farm business as a system. The Business Model Canvas (BMC) is a simple "plan on a page" that helps growers map how their farm business currently works. If the grower finds the BMC intuitive and useful, they can use it to map how a new revenue idea might work in practical detail.

This tool allows growers to think about market and pathways to market, as an iterative process in analysing and deciding on crop options. There is a version of the BMC in the Workbook, with questions to answer about a new crop or business option. The BMC, shown in the Grower Workbook as Figure 3.1, asks questions under themed headings:

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Marketplace: Who will buy it? What specific need does the new crop satisfy for buyers? Why will they choose to buy from me, and not someone else?

Production: What and who will I rely on, outside the farm workforce and assets, for this new crop, and how reliable/risky are these people and things?

Money: Are there costs for the new crop (e.g. certification, packaging, energy, waste disposal) that I haven't considered in my usual farm budgeting process?

Once a specific option has been identified as having good potential, the business model canvas can be a useful way to break down aspects of the viability of the option, including who will buy it (customer segments), what their specific needs are (quality, quantity, methods of delivery) and the range of systems that might need to be in place to support the grower beyond the farm (e.g. skills and inputs the grower will need to access from outside the farm).



Figure 3.2 The Business Model Canvas – a framework to map the pros and cons of a new revenue option in farm diversification

MARKETPLACE	PRODUCTION	MONEY
Customer segments	Key resources	Cost structure
Customer relationships	Key activities	Revenue streams
Channels	Key partnerships	
Value proposition		

3.5 How to analyse and compare options

Table 3.6 gives an overview of 10 options that growers might consider, with brief notes on each option's pros and cons. A few 'similar options' are also listed in Table 3.6 to illustrate to growers that thinking about 'farming systems' and pros and cons will point towards **several possible ways forward**. It is important not to settle too quickly on just one option.

In the remainder of this section, the 10 options are profiled to show how growers can analyse their preferred options. The options profiled demonstrate how to test which of the grower's preferred options might best fit the grower's individual circumstances.

These profiled options are not recommended as blanket solutions for everyone. Instead, this section is intended to demonstrate the type of analyses, sources of information, and range of factors to consider for any new crop or enterprise added to an existing farm business. For example, the pistachio case study shows the kind of analysis and thinking that a grower could undertake to decide which of several different tree nuts might be a good option for them.

There is an option analysis template for growers to use in the Grower Workbook.

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Table 3.6 Summary of options that winegrape growers could investigate further for farm diversification in the Murray Valley, Riverina and Riverland (ordered approximately from those soonest to provide financial return, to those with longer lag time to generate return)

Option	Main pro	Main con
Melon page 33	Quick to establish; cash crop during establishment of new perennials	Potential for glut/price and supply fluctuation; limited market for seconds; need pre-secured buyer and to meet quality specs
Vineyard optimisation page 34	Reduce inputs and improve soil; optimise existing vines/operation; low capital input for benefit	Capital investment into vines that are currently not providing return; loss of income/vine health from 'mothballed' blocks; assumes future market for winegrapes
Dried vine fruit page 35	Familiar in the region; in demand with main processor/aggregator supporting expansion	Specialised harvest and post-harvest machinery and infrastructure may be a pinch point; potential future glut
Asparagus page 36	Familiar in the region; can recover after drought/low irrigation; counter seasonal to winegrapes	Labour intensive; perishable with short shelf life; import competition from Peru
Fig page 37	Deep rooted, drought tolerant, long lived; relatively short time to crop; familiar, with established growers in the region; may suit niche/small scale growers	Fragile fresh fruit (harvest labour, post-harvest cool store and freight); need for value-add options; no grower association

Similar options: Pumpkin, winter brassica
Further information: Melons Australia

Similar options: Inter-row planting, biochar from prunings
Further information: DPIRD NSW, Wine Australia

Similar options: Prune, table grape
Further information: Dried Fruits Australia – Best Practice Guides

Similar options: Okra, native flowers
Further information: Australian Asparagus Council

Similar options: Olive, passionfruit, pomegranate
Further information: Fig Growing in NSW (2002)

Option	Main pro	Main con
Value-add wine and grape juice page 38	Potential alternate income from winegrapes; established processing; contract payment terms may be better than winery	Variable/sometimes lower return than winery; requires pressing equipment and transport for juice; winery equipment for vinegar
	Similar options: Vegan honey, vermouth **Further information:** AusGrape	
Pistachio page 39	Drought tolerant; current market demand	Time to establish; vulnerable to global markets/competition with large corporate investors
	Similar options: Hazelnut, walnut, pecan **Further information:** Pistachio Growers Association	
Jujubes page 40	Suited to arid areas; untapped and large export market	Small or niche domestic market that may be a glut risk if too many plant; limited local cultivation (unfamiliar)
	Similar options: Date, carob **Further information:** Australian Jujubes	
Host solar panels page 42	Potential crop and climate buffering for vines; potential to reduce on-farm carbon footprint (if panels owned)	High up-front cost; planning and regulatory requirements; require proximity to transmission lines
	Similar options: Host wind turbines, host transmission lines **Further information:** Clean Energy Council	
Carbon farming page 43	Potential for sale of Australian Carbon Credit Units (ACCUs) or insetting; soil benefits on farm; marketing/branding value	Highly dependent on soil and climate conditions; long term commitment; complex to establish; may need stacking with biodiversity markets to achieve return
	Similar options: Nature-based markets, host renewable infrastructure **Further information:** Wine Australia	



3.5.1 Melon

Why consider melons?

Melons (watermelons and rockmelons) are a well-established Australian industry producing over 200,000 tonnes/year, worth ~$248 million. They are already grown in the Riverina, Murray Valley, and Riverland meaning established local knowledge and distribution networks already exist. However, projected extreme heatwaves may limit the viability of this option in the Riverland. Predictable water availability across the summer growing season is essential to optimal production.

Melons are best suited to warm regions and can be a suitable quick-return cash crop during transition from winegrapes to other perennial trellis, vine or bush crops.

Table 3.7 Consider your operating environment: what to know before planting melon

TOPIC	KEY POINTS FOR GROWERS
Climate	Optimal growing temperature 25-30˚C, with required minimum at germination 20˚C. Warm overnight temperatures for best fruit size and time to maturation.
Water	Soil and season dependent but range from ~3ML/ha (drip irrigation) to ~6 ML/ha (overhead sprinkler or flood). Consistent water important at fruit set.
Soil and nutrients	Grow well on sandy to clay loam soil (pH 6–6.5). Heavy feeders – may require considerable inputs (e.g. N: 60-180 kg/ha, P: 30-90 kg/ha, K: 50-120 kg/ha).
Pest and disease risk	Common pest and disease risks are pythium, phytophthora, downy mildews, bacterial wilt.
Harvest and post-harvest considerations	Harvest 10-16 weeks after planting. There is good access to established freight and distribution networks. Riverina and Murray value are preferred regions due to their proximity to Melbourne and Sydney fruit markets.

Profit potential and market outlook

Investment timeline: Melons are a fast-turnover annual crop, typical yields are 100-150 t/ha with an average farmgate value at 2022 of ~$795/t[32]. Labour demand is moderate at ~60-70 hr/ha across the production cycle[33]. Flexible as a discretionary or bridging crop, or as an intercrop during establishment of perennial horticulture[34].

Market opportunities: There is strong access to established freight and distribution networks. Market returns depend on quality and timings, as there is a risk of glut and fruit rejection ('seconds') and no local options to use seconds fruit. Oversupply risk rises during La Niña years due to expanded planting and high yields[35]. Establishing relationship with buyer as early as possible, and meeting their quality specifications are key to success.

Further information

- Melons Australia is an established industry association with many resources freely available: www.melonsaustralia.org.au
- Case study: Young family turns table grape property into watermelon farm in Far West New South Wales

Other annuals to consider?

Depending on local climate, farm finances and water access, alternate annuals that might provide cash flow while transitioning the farm include pumpkin, brassicas, eggplant, tomato, seed crops.

Longer-term investment and commitment to annuals might support consideration of protected cropping of high value annuals such as eggplant, tomato, capsicum, chilli, cucumber, leafy greens, herbs, flowers. See HERE for information about protected cropping.

[32] Hort Innovation (2022) Melon Strategic Investment Plan. www.horticulture.com.au/globalassets/hort-innovation/levy-fund-financial-and-management-documents/sip-2022-2026-pdfs/hort-innovation-sip-2022-26-melon-r2.pdf
[33] NSW Department of Primary Industries (2013) Watermelon seedless gross margin budget. archive.dpi.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/470034/Watermelon-seedless-gross-margin-budget.pdf
[34] De Maijer, D. (2023) Evaluation of Intercropping Watermelon and Immature Oil Palm: Implications for Vegetative Growth, Fruit Weight and Yield. edepot.wur.nl/633307
[35] Hort Innovation (2023) Melon industry statistics 2022–23. www.horticulture.com.au



3.5.2 Vineyard optimisation

Why consider vineyard optimisation?

Alongside adding diversification options, growers can consider how the vineyard is currently configured and managed. While many of these ideas are well understood, changing market conditions, input costs and water availability make it worthwhile checking the current system is still fit for purpose.

Some changes to vineyard management can reduce costs, improve efficiency or better align production with market demand. Some changes require capital investment and time to deliver benefits, and should be considered in the wider diversification strategy, including the grower's financial position and goals.

Table 3.8 Consider your operating environment: what to know before optimising your vineyard

PROS	CONS
• Improves vineyard efficiency, and consistency of production • Can reduce labour, water and fuel costs (less evaporation/runoff, less slashing) • Retains and builds on existing infrastructure, equipment and grower skills	• Some changes take time to deliver returns (e.g. vine renovation) • Benefits tend to be incremental/margin shifting, rather than transformational • Some require upfront capital or labour investment • Requires close understanding of block performance and cost structure (e.g. block-level monitoring, data analysis, cost-to-return assessment)

Key optimisation options

- Rationalise underperforming blocks - take low-performing or less economic areas out of production (mothballed) to reduce costs, and allow water to be reallocated or traded.
- Renovate existing vines - topworking to alternative varieties, cultivars or clones to better align production with market demand while retaining established root system. Potentially faster and lower-cost pathway than replanting, where vine health and site suitability allow.
- Improve irrigation efficiency - tighter monitoring and irrigation scheduling can reduce water use while maintaining yield and quality.
- Upgrade vineyard floor management – where possible, cover cropping can help weed suppression, improve soil condition and hence reduce reliance on some inputs. Water use and slashing need to be weighed up in selection, establishment and maintenance of the cover crop.
- Optimise vineyard configuration - adjustments to trellising, row spacing or canopy management should be costed against likely savings (e.g. tractor pass and labour efficiency, fruit quality, suitability for more efficient/up-to-date mechanisation).

Profit potential and market outlook

- **Investment timelines and financial considerations:** Optimisation measures can be implemented progressively, but take persistence and patience. Cost savings (e.g. reduced inputs, improved water use efficiency) may be realised in the short term, while benefits from renovation or reconfiguration might take several seasons to emerge.
- **Market opportunities:** Optimisation does not change the underlying exposure to winegrape markets, but may improve resilience by lowering the cost base and improving fruit quality or consistency. This might suit a diversified farm that retains some portion of winegrapes.

Further information:

- Wine Australia and Australian Wine Research Institute have extensive resources available on vineyard optimisation
- Regional Peak Industry Body – Extension Offices are available for growers wanting to improve vineyard practices
- Flannery, P and Dry, N (2025) DPIRD Options for vineyards: reworking, top-grafting, replanting or removing www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/1323616/Options-for-vineyards.pdf
- Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board (Landscape South Australia) - Riverland Soil Improvement Trials – Final Report (2021/22) cdn.environment.sa.gov.au/landscape/docs/mr/Riverland-Soil-Improvement_Final.pdf



3.5.3 Dried vine fruit

Why consider dried fruits?

Dried vine fruits have a healthy market outlook and active industry support. Existing infrastructure in the regions, existing skills and regional experience make this a realistic option, particularly under water limiting futures. Suitable varieties include Sunmuscat, Selma Pete and other private varieties.

Table 3.9 Consider your operating environment: what to know before planting dried fruit

TOPIC	KEY POINTS FOR GROWERS
Climate	Well-suited to warm, dry regions; tolerant of high summer temperatures. Relies on good sun exposure for productivity and drying.
Water	Water demand varies by season and soil type, with averages ranging from 7-10 ML/ha/year.
Soil and nutrients	Grows well on well-drained, non-alkaline (pH <7.5) soils. Need to replace nutrients removed from the vineyard based on number of tonnes produced in the previous season.
Pest and disease risk	Common pests include fruit fly, light brown apple moth and snails. Fungal diseases such as *Botrytis* rot (grey mould), downy mildew and powdery mildew can also be a concern.
Harvest and post-harvest considerations	First harvest ~18 months post-planting. Trellis drying and mechanised harvest reduce costs. High technical and capital threshold for new entrants[36].

Profit potential and market outlook

Investment timeline: Yields vary from 7-14 t/ha depending on variety and management. The skills and knowledge required are similar to those required for winegrape production, and existing farm infrastructure and equipment can often be utilised. Labour demand is moderate, primarily due to mechanisation of many operations.

Market opportunities: Strong domestic market access with export growth potential. The industry association was actively recruiting growers as at 2026. The value chain is well established with key buyers including Sunbeam and Australian Premium. Market projections are positive for both domestic and export sales.



Further information

- Dried Fruits Australia (DFA) are a long established industry association with comprehensive producer resources, many are freely available
- Dried Fruits Australia's establishment and cost of production calculator is available to ADF members

Other trellis crops to consider?

For growers wanting to make use of their existing winegrape infrastructure, table grapes are an alternative to dried vine fruit. Olives can be grown on trellis in high density 'hedgerow' plantings. See HERE for information about olives.

Other vine options require careful selection of genetics to ensure those chosen are suited to climate conditions on-farm. These may include: passionfruit (with frost protection); heat-tolerant kiwifruit varieties; self-pollinating and sun exposure tolerant dragonfruit.

[36] Dried Fruits Australia (2024) Technology roadmap for dried grape production. driedfruitsaustralia.org.au



3.5.4 Asparagus

Why consider asparagus?

A deciduous perennial spear crop currently grown in inland regions, with established markets and pathways to market. Production rates in Australia have declined 50% since 2019 due to import competition. Production is counter-seasonal to winegrapes, offering labour balance and diversification. Low maintenance once established.

However, growers would be wise to examine market projections and emerging export opportunities, prior to committing to grow asparagus.

Table 3.10 Consider your operating environment: what to know before planting asparagus

TOPIC	KEY POINTS FOR GROWERS
Climate	Prefers temperate zones (18˚C to 25˚C during the Spring) with winter dormancy (–5˚C to 5˚C). Frost can damage emerging spears.
Water	Reliable irrigation needed, particularly during spear production and fern growth. Sensitive to water stress and also waterlogging.
Soil and nutrients	Best on loamy or sandy loam soils (pH 6.5–7.5). Poorly drained soils increase disease risk.
Pest and disease risk	Common pest and disease risks include thrips, Rutherglen bug, *Fusarium*, *Stemphylium*, *Phomopsis asparagi* (blight), *Puccinia asparagi* (rust), *Colletotrichum gloeosproioides* (anthracnose).
Harvest and post-harvest considerations	Hand harvest means high labour demand. On-farm cooling and packing facilities best - rapid post-harvest cooling is critical to maintaining quality.

Profit potential and market outlook

Investment timeline: Commercial harvest starts in year 3, full yield in 4–5 years and productive 8-12 years. Labour-intensive harvest (~85% cost of production)[37].

Market opportunities: Competing with low-cost imports; strong relationships with buyers are critical. Export potential (re)emerging although strong continuing competition from Peru and Mexico. On-farm or regional cooling and packing facilities needed.

Further information

- Australian Asparagus Council
- NSW DPI AgFacts

Other crops options?

Native flowers and okra are two quite different options that may suit inland systems, offering diversification across different timeframes and market channels.

Okra is a short-season annual suited to warm conditions, offering a faster pathway to income than asparagus. While not perennial, it shares some practical similarities with asparagus, including a defined production season and multiple harvest passes over that period. However, markets are relatively small and will require establishment of strong buyer relationships.

Native flowers (e.g. waxflower, banksia, eucalyptus foliage) are perennial crops suited to low rainfall environments, generally with low water requirements once established. Australia imports around 50% of flowers sold here, domestic and export markets for Australian natives may have untapped demand. Success depends on species selection, labour for harvest, and strong market connections to meet quality and timing requirements.

Both options operate in specialised markets and are best suited to growers prepared to work on establishing clear buyer relationships and pathway to market, and the capacity to manage labour and product quality.

[37] ABC News Online (2025) Asparagus growers leave crops to rot as prices drop below production cost. www.abc.net.au/news/2025-01-23/asparagus-growers-abandon-crop-supermarket-prices-drop/104819678

3.5.5 Fig

Why consider figs?



Historically, dried fig production was an important horticultural enterprise in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area but the industry declined in the 1950s due to cheaper imports. Domestic demand is now mostly for fresh figs, with good market stability and limited imports given their perishability and transport constraints. Conversely, exporting fresh figs may be prohibitive for Australian producers. Figs are well-suited to hot, dry summers and mild winters.

The Riverland offers potential for both fresh and dried fig production, depending on the variety grown. Figs align well with existing vineyard trellis systems for espalier, bird netting, and frost protection. They could potentially be intercropped during establishment and serve as a transition crop.

Table 3.11 Consider your operating environment: what to know before planting figs

TOPIC	KEY POINTS FOR GROWERS
Climate	Prefer relatively hot, dry summers. Very hot, dry spells will cause fruit-drop even with irrigation[38]. Frost risk during spring budburst.
Water	Require regular irrigation, particularly during establishment and dry periods, also to ensure fruit quality. Once established, relatively drought tolerant.
Soil and nutrients	Prefer well-drained soils, ideally sandy loams (pH 6.0 to 6.5). Not big feeders but getting balance of nutrients right is key to quality fruit production.
Pest and disease risk	Fig scale insects and nematodes are common. Diseases include fig rust and leaf spot.
Harvest and post-harvest considerations	Mechanisation options are limited given the fruit is soft, so labour costs can be high. Perishability of fresh fruit means cool store (0˚C), cold transport and market/ purchaser need to be well established in line with harvest.

Profit potential and market outlook

Investment timeline: Trees bear fruit within ~2-3 years, reaching optimal yield by ~5 years. Under current 2026 market conditions, 25ha planting may reach cash flow positive within 2-3 years, with an approximate 7-year payback (assuming self-funded/interest-free). Labour requirement is intensive due to hand harvest. Cold storage (0˚C), packing and transport co-ordination needed.

Market opportunities: the domestic market is currently stable for fresh figs, while dried figs have a limited but established demand. Global fig production rose by 119% between 2010 and 2020, highlighting both global market opportunity and growing competition from lower-cost producers[39] for dried figs. Potential for premium domestic niche markets.

Further information

- Queensland DAF
- NSW DPI
- Case study: Award-winning Riverland dried fruit? It's a pretty fig deal

Other trees quick to crop?

Olives, pomegranates and persimmons sit in a similar category to figs; they are hardy, perennial fruit crops suited to hot inland conditions with relatively moderate water demand and a relatively short time to full production (3-5 years).

Citrus are slower to crop than figs and quicker than nuts. They also sit between figs and nuts for water demand, so may be a consideration for growers who can manage ~4 years time to return. More information about citrus can be found HERE.

[38] Carey, D. et al. (2017) High Value Horticulture Value Chains for the Queensland Murray-Darling Basin Project: Activity 1 – Assessing Horticulture Crop Suitability for the Queensland Murray Darling Basin Study Area' report. Queensland Government Department of Agriculture and Fisheries. www.publications.qld.gov.au/dataset/high-value-horticulture-value-chains-for-the-queensland-murray-darling-basin-project-activity-1

[39] Tirkaz, E., Nalci, b., & Aksoy, U. (2022) World Fig Production and Trade in book: Advances in Fig Research and Sustainable Production. www.asau.ru/files/pdf/3313481.pdf



3.5.6 Value-add wine and grape juice

Why consider value-add wine and grape juice?

Value-adding options for surplus grapes include grape juice concentrate, red wine vinegar, and red wine fractionation. For winegrape growers who do not press fruit or make wine, value-adding options are limited without capital investment in winery or processing infrastructure. However, regional development of value-adding options could help manage the current glut of red wine, creating alternative revenue streams.

Options also exist for pomace and marc value-adding but need technical infrastructure, and returns may be low or hard to predict (e.g. silaged marc for stock feed, methanogenesis for fuel, secondary beverages grappa, piquette). Using grape juice and other processing byproducts for vineyard dust control may be an option.

Returns from value-adding are generally dependent on product choice, processing efficiency, and market demand. However, diversion of surplus grapes to non-wine products might improve payment terms for winegrapes and reduce waste during periods of oversupply.

Table 3.12 Consider your operating environment: what to know before pursuing value-add products

PROS	CONS
• Creates alternative revenue streams from surplus grapes • Can support regional wine glut management • Flexible product options for food, beverage, farm inputs and cosmetics markets • Contractors, co-operatives or mobile processing would reduce need for individual winery investment.	• Capital intensive; most require access to processing equipment or infrastructure • Market prices can be volatile; may need to establish market • Technical expertise is required to produce high-quality products • Not all options are feasible for growers without winery facilities.

Profit potential and market outlook

Investment timelines: Establishing value-add processing requires significant capital investment in winery or processing infrastructure, such as vacuum evaporation, reverse osmosis (RO), or distillation equipment. Returns depend on product mix and efficiency, and are typically medium- to long-term, as markets need to be established and processing optimised.

Market opportunities:

- **Grape juice concentrate:** Used in beverages, jams, sauces, syrups and desserts. Globally traded and already produced by major Australian wine producers. Pricing is volatile, influenced by international supply and demand.
- **Red wine vinegar:** Established domestic market with several existing producers across Australia. Can be marketed to commercial and retail customers.
- **Red wine fractionation products:** Includes ethanol, concentrated antioxidants, volatile aroma compounds, and red wine concentrate. Applications span food, beverage, cosmetics, and wellness industries. Fractionation methods include vacuum distillation, reverse osmosis, and spinning cone columns. Equipment is available commercially in Australia (e.g. Winequip).



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Further information

- VAF Memstar
- Winequip on Alcohol Reduction

3.5.7 Pistachio



Why consider pistachios?

Pistachios are a small, husked tree nut in high demand globally. They are relatively drought-tolerant and suited to hot, dry inland climates. Once established, they are more resilient to regulated deficit irrigation than other nut species (e.g. some flexibility to adapt to periods of overly high water cost). Chilling requirement means that variety selection would be important for the Riverina, and warmer sites in the Murray Valley and Riverland.

Australian production in 2026 fell well below the domestic demand (~5,000 tonnes) with imports from California and Iran filling this gap. However, global competition is expected to increase as new plantings in California and Spain mature, and corporate-style investors develop some plantings in Australia. The outlook is that markets can accommodate more Australian production, but prices going forward will depend strongly on expansion of global supply.

Table 3.13 Consider your operating environment: what to know before planting pistachios

TOPIC	KEY POINTS FOR GROWERS
Climate	Require hot summers (~600 hours above 30˚C) and cool winters (~800 hours below 7˚C) for nut and bud development. Avoid frost prone areas as late frosts can impact yields.
Water	Moderate-to-high water demand for full production (10-13 ML/ha/year) with peak demand at nut fill (mid-late summer). Reliable irrigation required[40]. Drought tolerant but not productive in drought conditions.
Soil and nutrients	Prefers deep, well-drained fertile soils. Nutrient uptake is influenced by irrigation management. Micronutrients are important, particularly boron (B).
Pest and disease risk	Historically affected by bacterial disease (*Xanthomonas translucens pv*) and fungal disease (*Colletotrichum acutatum*). Effective management strategies are now available.
Harvest and post-harvest considerations	Mechanised harvest. Coincides with winegrape season. Consideration of labour availability and capital investment required. Availability of contractors. Transport to Robinvale processing plant adds cost, unless local facilities are developed.

Profit potential and market outlook

Investment timeline: Pistachios are a long-term investment. Trees take 5-6 years to produce the first nuts, with peak yields around 20 years. Average production is ~3 t/ha across a two-year crop cycle (~6 t/ha in an 'on-crop' year).

Market opportunities: Domestic market is growing, but global competition is likely to increase. Australian pistachio output is projected to triple by 2032 due to corporate plantings along the Murray corridor, which could increase competition and oversupply risk[41]. Processing is currently centralised at Robinvale, but there are potential opportunities in premium branded Australian pistachios if critical mass and logistics were established.

Further information

- NSW DPI Primefact 1438 (2016)
- Pistachio Growers' Association

Other nuts to consider?

There is current export demand for almonds, and many corporate investors are planting. Almonds are not profiled here however, due to their higher water demand than pistachios; sensitivity to periods of water deficit; and potential for new entrants to be outcompeted on scale, production efficiency and pathways to market by large corporatised operations.

Hazelnuts, walnuts, pecans are alternative nut options to consider. They operate in a similar or slightly lower water-use range to pistachios, can be managed under periods of deficit irrigation, and there appears to be capacity for additional supply in current domestic markets.

[40] NSW Department of Primary Industries (2016) Pistachio industry expansion. www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/586554/Pistachio-industry-expansion.pdf
[41] ABC News Online (2024) Bumper pistachio crop with more to come. www.abc.net.au/news/2024-12-24/bumper-pistachio-crop-with-more-to-come-christmas-nut/104716126

3.5.8 Jujube

Why consider jujubes?



Jujubes (Chinese red dates) are a niche tree fruit with high export potential to Asia; the crop is suited for both fresh and dried markets. Jujubes are suited to warm, arid inland regions and are highly drought tolerant once established. They offer high potential for export, particularly to China, which accounts for 90% of global demand. Domestic production is small but increasing; the Australian jujube industry currently has about 60 growers and 50,000 trees[42].

However, the domestic market is limited; entering an emerging industry, with a limited domestic market, presents both a risk and opportunity to growers.

Table 3.14 Consider your operating environment: what to know before planting jujubes

TOPIC	KEY POINTS FOR GROWERS
Climate	Long, hot and dry summers with cool temperatures during winter (~200–400 below 7˚C). Warm winters may impact fruit set and reduce yield reliability.
Water	Moderate water demand (6-9 ML/ha/year). Highly drought-tolerant once established, but reliable commercial yield requires consistent irrigation.
Soil and nutrients	Tolerant of wide range of soils including heavier clays and moderately saline conditions. Higher salt tolerance than many temperate fruit crops.
Pest and disease risk	Limited reports of major pests and disease in Australia but may emerge as plantings increase. Monitoring and early intervention advised.
Harvest and post-harvest considerations	Fruit ripens non-simultaneously, meaning harvest can be spread across and extended season. Can be harvested ripe or after drying on the tree. Extended harvest window spreads labour, but can make labour management complex. Careful post-harvest handling and cool storage are important, as fruit continues to mature after harvest.

Profit potential and market outlook

Investment timeline: Jujubes are medium- to long-term investment. Positive cashflow is possible by Year 3, with full payback in ~7 years, assuming establishment is self-financed. Labour is spread across the harvest season, and cool store costing and cool transportation can add to the cost of production.

Market opportunities: Strong demand exists in Asian markets but this is an emerging industry with limited domestic awareness and markets. Export development likely essential for scale and established growers may be wary of new entrants if expansion creates glut or quality risks. The industry is supported by AgriFutures Emerging Industries, and has developing grower association capacity.

Further information

- Australian Jujube Growers
- WA DPIRD Growing Jujubes in Western Australia (2014)
- AgriFutures Jujube Strategic Blueprint (2022)

[42] ABC News Online (2025) Farmers invest in jujubes despite lack of consumer knowledge. www.abc.net.au/news/rural/2025-08-09/farmers-invest-in-jujubes-despite-lack-of-consumer-knowledge/105395704

Other emerging tree crops to consider?

Carob and dates are alternative perennial tree crops suited to hot, low-rainfall environments. Both have niche but potentially expanding markets and are well adapted to inland irrigation regions such as the Riverland, Riverina and Murray Valley.

Carob is highly drought tolerant, has low input requirements once established, and is used in food, stockfeed and specialty products (e.g. carob powder as a cocoa substitute).

Dates are a premium horticultural product with strong demand in Middle Eastern and Asian markets, but require relatively high volume of reliable water, specific climatic conditions (hot, dry growing seasons and low humidity during ripening), and careful post-harvest handling.

Key considerations for emerging perennials:

- Varietal suitability - performance can vary significantly depending on cultivar, rootstock and match to site conditions. Long time and investment to discover wrong clone planted.
- Market development - domestic markets are small and can be quickly oversupplied. Individual growers in emerging crops may face thin or volatile markets.
- Export markets - developing export relationships and chains can be time consuming and risky.
- Processing requirements - crops that require processing (e.g. drying, grading, pitting, milling) need appropriate regional infrastructure development.

While emerging perennial tree crops may offer genuine new revenue opportunities and markets, they should be viewed as longer-term, higher-risk diversification options.



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3.5.9 Host solar panels



Why consider hosting solar panels?

Solar photovoltaic (PV) systems may offer some vineyards a revenue or cost-saving option, through on-farm energy generation to reduce electricity costs and emissions ('offsetting'), export of electricity to the grid ('feed in tariff'), or hosting arrangements where a third party installs and operates panels ('lease or licence').

Solar energy infrastructure is a mature technology with well-understood performance and financing models, and it can be compatible with viticulture when sited to avoid vine interference. Emerging research on agrivoltaics (solar panels integrated over or near crops) suggests in some systems and climates, shading from elevated PV panels has the potential to reduce evapotranspiration and improve water use efficiency, although outcomes are dependent on design, crop type and light-sensitivity.

Table 3.15 Consider your operating environment: what to know before introducing solar panels

PROS	CONS
• Can reduce on-farm electricity costs and emissions • Hosting models provide stable income • Revenue not dependent on rainfall • Shading can lower soil and air temperatures, and reduce water demand in some conditions • Established technology with many suppliers.	• Upfront capital costs if owned outright • Subject to state and local government planning conditions and approvals • Need grid connection availability if feed in tariff or other market arrangement is the aim • Requires careful siting to avoid excessive vine shading, or machinery and other operations conflict • Long-term contracts may affect future land use flexibility or sale.

Profit potential and market outlook

Investment timeline:

- Owner-funded systems typically require significant upfront capital, with paybacks often in the ~10 year range, depending on electricity prices, export arrangements and installation costs.
- Hosting or leasing arrangements reduce capital outlay and deliver predictable annual income over multi-year agreements, but contracting arrangements need to be carefully scrutinised and understood.

Market opportunities:

- The inland regions have strong solar resources, which can generate energy/value in the absence of water ('drought-resilient').
- Electricity generated on-site can be used to offset farm energy use, reducing overheads and decarbonising operations, which can be important for market access and demonstrating environmental credentials.
- On-site energy generation reduces farm reliance on external/imported energy sources and markets (e.g. diesel price shock, supply disruptions).
- Surplus generation can be sold if electricity grid access allows. Financial returns/rates can vary and may be relatively low per kilowatt hour (KWh), given up-front costs.
- Hosting models are increasingly offered by renewable energy developers seeking land for deployment.



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Further information

- Australian Guide to Agrisolar for Large-scale Solar
- Wine Australia Emissions Reduction Roadmap (2023)

3.5.10 Carbon farming

Why consider carbon farming?

On-farm carbon projects can be registered to generate Australian Carbon Credit Units (ACCUs), providing growers with a potential additional revenue stream. These projects are best suited to soils with low initial carbon, and carbon accumulation outcomes depend on soil type, climate, rainfall and management practices.

The most well established methods involve planting trees and shrubs (e.g. shelterbelts, reforestation of marginal land). More complex, harder to evidence and emerging methods include retaining forest that could be legally cleared, establishment of permanent groundcover, tillage elimination, production and use of biochar.

Carbon farming can coexist with viticulture, enhance soil health and may improve water-holding capacity. However, entry costs (e.g. registration), land-use implications, and the ongoing requirement for high-quality monitoring data remain constraints[43].

Table 3.16 Consider your operating environment: what to know before commencing carbon projects

PROS	CONS
• Compatible with existing viticulture; no interference with grape production • High-integrity ACCUs and a strong secondary market exist • Vegetation projects can use marginal or less productive land • Can be applied to 'inset' farm emissions internally, rather than selling credits externally. This is 'cost saving' rather than farm revenue generating.	• Carbon accumulation (biomass) is highly dependent on water availability (including rainfall) • Long-term commitment required; carbon storage is intended to be permanent • Projects attach to property title, and may affect sale • Failure to meet sequestration targets requires purchasing additional ACCUs (cost to grower) • Sale of credits means they can't be used as farm carbon credits (no 'double counting') • Upfront establishment costs may be incurred (e.g. fencing, equipment/machinery, tubestock planting).

Profit potential and market outlook

Investment timeline: Carbon farming is a long-term commitment. Returns from ACCU generation typically start after ~5 years, with credit issuances continuing for up to 25 years depending on the project type. Establishment costs vary by project and may include fencing, seeding, tubestock planting, equipment, and monitoring systems. Projects are tied to the property title, so land management must align with carbon storage requirements.

Market opportunities: ACCUs can be sold via government auctions (as-at 2026 ~$30/t CO_2-e[44]) or on the secondary market to private entities, with the market managed by the Clean Energy Regulator. Carbon farming can co-exist with vineyards, providing additional income without affecting grape production.

Demand is steady, but policy and market conditions may change. Strong planning, accurate baseline data, and high-quality monitoring are critical to secure and sustain returns.

As nature-based markets emerge and mature, carbon farming might become more worthwhile (feasible, financially justified, worth the paperwork) for inland winegrape growers, as part of a diversified or 'stacked' approach.

Further information

- Clean Energy Regulator guidelines
- Carbon Insetting Final Report (2024)

[43] AirborneLogic (2024) Carbon insetting for South Australian winegrape growers. www.wineaustralia.com/getmedia/89d2d626-09aa-4810-8e98-47cbe940589e/AGF2-17696322-AirborneLogic-Pty-Ltd-Final-Report_20240614_FINAL.pdf
[44] Based on ACCU spot market price at time of writing: accus.com.au

4 Grower's Plan

4.1 Farm Diversification Plan 45

- Timeline for diversification
- Visualising the farm as it is now, and as it will be in future

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- What does the business case deliver?
- How is the business case used?
- What does a business case achieve?
- OPTIONAL business case builder

4.3 How to talk to lenders 55

- What lenders typically want to see
- Questions lenders often ask
- Common reasons lenders refuse a request for loan

"Rome wasn't built in a day,
but they were laying bricks every hour."

- Attributed to J. Heywood[45]

4.1 Farm Diversification Plan

Developing a Farm Diversification Plan might take four to six months. Transitioning the farm from its current state and into a new crop or venture takes more time.

Indicative examples of time include:

- Removing vines and remediating soil in preparation to grow another crop might take up to 18 months
- Annual crops can be established in remediated soil, and will take around four months to crop
- Perennial crops can take from 3-15 years to reach optimum yield, depending on what is grown
- Non-crop options can be quick or slow depending on the task (e.g. obtaining Council approval and finding a builder to construct a fish farm or visitor accommodation).

The thinking in this section will set the grower up to follow a clear plan over the coming years. It is worth investing the time and effort to plan well – it is much cheaper to 'fail' on paper, than launch an ill-fated farm transition.

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Templates to support growers to develop a Farm Diversification Plan have also been developed and are provided in the Grower Workbook under Transition Steps and My Farm Diversification Plan. These templates allow you and the grower to sketch out steps over the next five years, to transition the current farm to a preferred future setup. All of the thinking and analyses from **My Future**, **My Situation** and **My Options** can and should be used to complete this template.

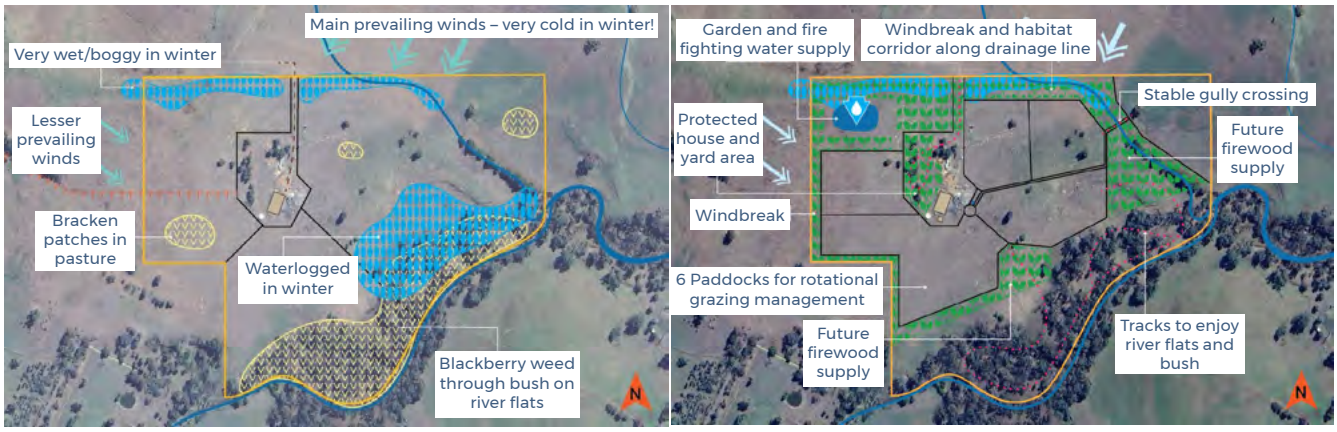
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It helps to use an aerial photo of the grower's property and the tables in the Grower Workbook to step out and visualise tasks the grower will need to undertake each year to achieve the new farm setup.

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Figure 4.1 shows an aerial photo of a farm with current state (A), and ideal state in five years (B)[46].

Figure 4.1 Now and future versions of your farm aerial view

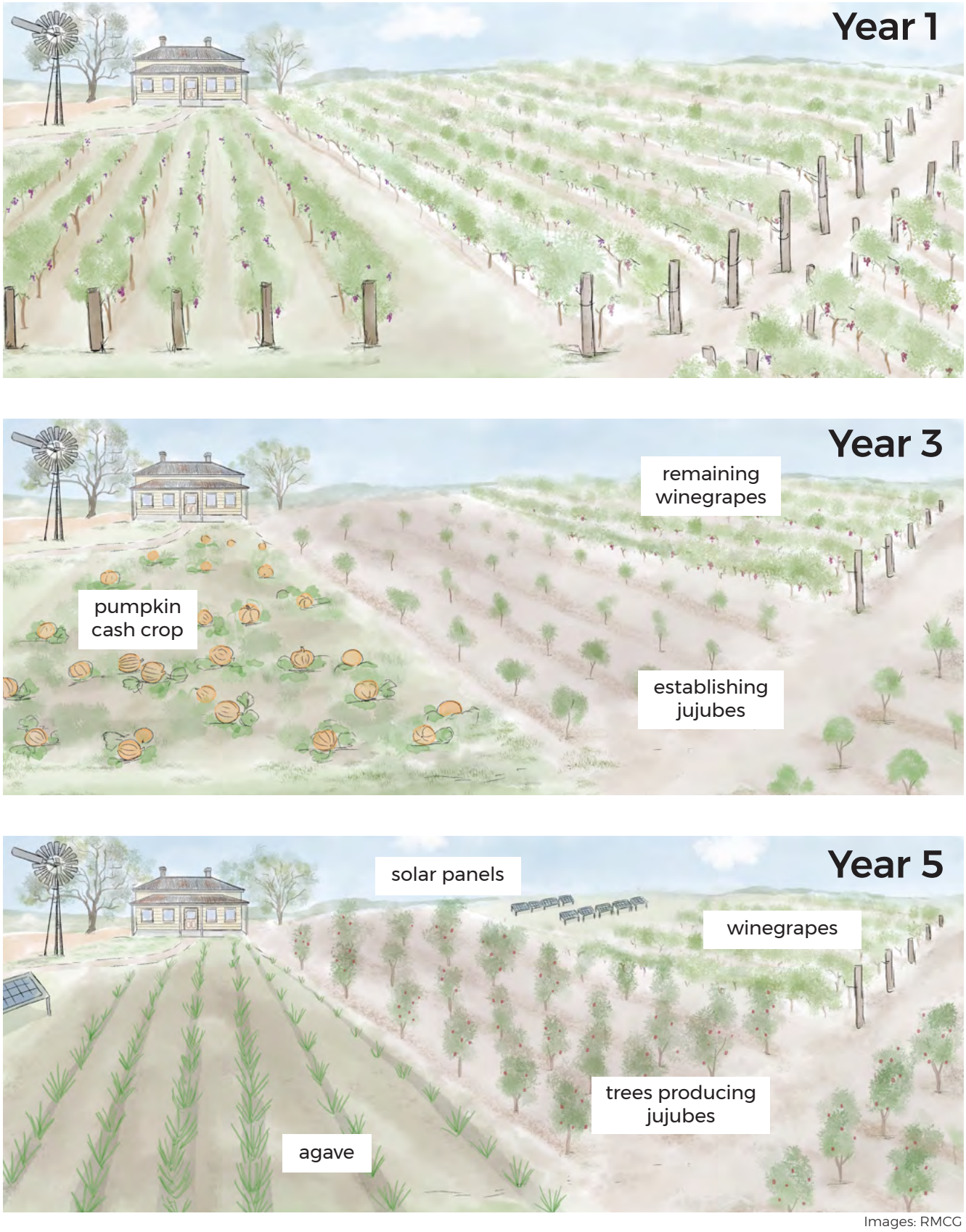


[45] Attributed to Heywood, J. (1538) A Dialogue Conteinyng the Nomber in Effect of all the Prouerbes in the Englishe Tongue. quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A03168.0001.001?view=toc
[46] Mitchell Shire Council (2024) Farm Plan Template. Accessed December 2025 at www.mitchellshire.vic.gov.au/assets/general-downloads/Environment-and-sustainability/Farm-Plan-template.pdf?utm

Visualising the new farm

Below is a simplified version of a Farm Diversification Plan in pictures. In this picture, the grower has removed 2/3 of vines by year three and planted 1/3 of the property in jujubes which are establishing. There is also a cash crop of pumpkins in 1/3 of the farm to provide some income while the jujubes establish. By year five, the jujubes are producing, 1/3 of the farm is now growing agave, and there is a remaining section of winegrapes. The grower accessed concessional finance to install solar panels that save farm energy costs (Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2 Simplified view of farm diversification over five years



Images: RMCG

4.2 Building a business case

4.2.1 Why develop a business case?

What does the business case deliver?

The business case should deliver a clear, evidence-based assessment of the proposed new crop or revenue option, including capital requirements, operating costs, expected returns and risk exposure. It must provide reliable financial modelling, supported by realistic production forecasts, pricing assumptions and sensitivity analysis.

The business case shows the grower (and potential lender) how the investment will likely perform under different conditions. For example, what returns will be made if everything goes well, and how the venture will fare if conditions get harder (e.g. increase in input costs, ongoing drought, change to export tariffs).

The business case should also outline risk mitigation strategies, different funding options and the commercial rationale to ensure the grower demonstrates a complete understanding of the financial, operational and strategic implications of a lender putting money forward to support diversification.

Table 4.1 Critical questions the business case must answer

KEY QUESTIONS	PURPOSE
Is the option commercially viable?	Determines profitability and payback period
What are the total capital requirements?	Identifies upfront and staged investment costs
What is the expected return on investment (ROI)?	Assesses financial attractiveness
What are the key risks?	Identifies commercial, production and financing risks
Can the option service debt under stress conditions?	Demonstrates the financial resilience of the option

How is the business case used?

The business case assists growers to make informed decisions, rather than relying on assumptions. It provides transparency on cash flow timing, loan servicing capacity and return on investment to reduce uncertainty.
For lenders and investors, the business case builds confidence by demonstrating that an investment is likely to deliver returns, and that risks have been identified, understood and mitigated.

A business case is useful to test diversification ideas regardless of whether the grower is using (and risking) their own capital, or seeking to use another source (e.g. investor, family, bank).

What does a business case achieve?

A well-developed business case enables confident decision-making for the grower, improves the likelihood of securing finance, and gives a clear view of an alternative option's contribution to long-term business resilience. It ensures that capital is invested based on a strong commercial justification and acceptable risk exposure. By clearly defining financial outcomes and risks, it provides the foundation for steady future business performance.

The process for developing a business case is outlined in the Grower Workbook. This section outlines the structure and process required to develop a farming business case. A business case is a decision-support tool used to determine whether a proposed investment is financially viable, strategically aligned and operationally achievable.

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4.2.2 Optional business case builder

This section is a detailed and step-by-step Business Case Builder. As a service provider, you might choose to guide a grower through this section if they are planning to approach a lender to get funds for their diversification. The fundamental question the grower answers herein is:

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'What is the opportunity worth?'

Table 4.2 lists some 'off the shelf' business case building tools and information that are available online and as downloadable spreadsheets. You may like to use these with your grower if they prefer to work in spreadsheets, rather than in the templates that make up the remainder of this section.

Table 4.2 Budgeting tools, templates and guides

TYPE OF TOOLS, TEMPLATES AND GUIDES	LINK
Department of Primary Industries (DPI) Budget templates (Farm Forms) • Cashbook • Crop • Livestock	GO HERE archive.dpi.nsw.gov.au/content/agriculture/farm-budgets-and-costs/templates
Natural Resources and Environment (NRE) Farm Business Planning Tools (including wine specific): • Gross Margin Analysis Tools and Spreadsheets • Financial Management Modules • Irrigation Investment Guidance	GO HERE nre.tas.gov.au/agriculture/investing-in-irrigation/farm-business-planning-tools
Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) Partial Budget	GO HERE mbfp.mla.com.au/setting-directions/tool-113-partial-budget-template/
Template Farm Table Budgeting resources and tools on planning, tax deductions, drought, succession planning, profit and loss, farm economic analysis, calculators and templates.	GO HERE farmtable.com.au/ag-business-resources/budgeting/
FarmTable Whole Farm Key Performance Indicator (KPI) Calculator	GO HERE farmtable.com.au/ag-library/ag-business-resources/understanding-the-whole-farm-kpi-calculator/

This section helps growers turn simple estimates (yield, price, area) into projected income and shows how much a proposed new crop could earn.

Table 4.3 Income calculation

ITEM	CALCULATION	AMOUNT ($/HA)
Expected yield (t/ha)	-	
Expected price ($/t)	-	
Gross income per ha	**Yield x Price**	=
Area planted (ha)	-	
TOTAL INCOME	**Income (ha) x Area**	=

It important to list all the main costs involved each year. This table helps the grower add key running costs to see the true cost of production per hectare.

Establishment costs (CAPEX)

Starting a new crop often requires one-off spending on items like trees, irrigation, storage upgrades or equipment. This section helps the grower list those items and add them up. Knowing start-up cost is essential because it shows how much money the grower needs before the crop goes in the ground.

Template 4.12 Start-up costs

ITEM	COST PER UNIT	UNITS	CALCULATION	TOTAL ($)
Planting/seed			COST X UNITS	
Irrigation equipment				
Trellis/fencing/structure				
Soil prep and machinery work				
Shed/storage				
Total start-up cost			**sum:**	

Annual running/operating costs (OPEX)

Each year you the grower will have costs like fertiliser, water, labour, fuel and repairs. This section helps add them up and work out operating cost per hectare.

Template 4.13 Costing table

ITEM	COST PER HA	AREA (HA)	CALCULATION	TOTAL ($YR)
Fertilisers			COST x AREA	
Chemicals/spray				
Water/irrigation				
Fuel				
Labour				
Electricity				
Contractors				
Packaging	LUMP SUM			
Freight/levies				
Agronomy/advice				
Repairs and maintenance				
Other fixed costs				
Total annual cost			**sum:**	

Gross margin

Once you know the grower's likely income and annual running costs, this section shows how to calculate a simple gross margin. This tells the grower whether the crop provides a positive financial return that could help support overall business viability.

Template 4.14 Gross margin table calculation

ITEM	CALCULATION	AMOUNT ($/HA)
Income per ha		
Annual cost per ha		
Gross margin per ha	**Income – Cost**	

What will cash flow look like?

This section helps the grower understand how much money they'll need over time, when they will need it, when income will start, and when the crop becomes cash-neutral (pays for itself).

Money needed before income starts

Most crops do not generate income immediately. This section helps calculate how much money the grower needs to cover start-up costs and early-year expenses, before any income arrives. It gives a clear view of the gap the grower will need to fund from savings, off-farm income or finance/borrowing.

Template 4.15 Total pre-income cash requirement

YEAR	COSTS ($)	NOTES
Year 0		Upfront investment/establishment cost
Year 1		No income
Year 2		No or very low yield
Year 3		First meaningful harvest
Total cash required before income		

Total cash needed = establishment cost + cost of non-productive years

Cash flow timing worksheet

Cash flow is about when money goes in and out, not just how much. This section helps growers map the times of the year when money is going out (spending on inputs, water or labour), and when money is coming in. Understanding timing is vital to make sure growers can meet their expenses throughout the season, and are not tempted by a false sense of riches when large blocks of income arrive.

Template 4.16 Cash out (expenditure across the year)

ITEM	JAN-MAR	APR-JUN	JUL-SEP	OCT-DEC	NOTES
Establishment costs					
Chemicals/spray					
Water/irrigation					
Fuel					
Labour					
Electricity					
Contractors					
Packaging					
Freight/levies					
Agronomy/advice					
Repairs and maintenance					
Other fixed costs					
Total cost					

Template 4.17 Cash in (revenue across the year)

INCOME SOURCE	SEASON/MONTH	AMOUNT	NOTES
Main harvest			
Second/late harvest			
Contract payments			
Other income			

Breakeven Worksheet

Template 4.18 Breakeven yield

ITEM	CALCULATION	AMOUNT
Total cost per ha		
Expected price		
Breakeven yield	Total cost per ha/expected price	

Template 4.19 Breakeven price

ITEM	CALCULATION	AMOUNT
Total cost per ha		
Breakeven price	Total cost per ha/expected yield	

When does it become cash neutral?

This section helps the grower identify the first year when a crop 'pays its own way'. A crop becomes 'cash neutral' when the grower's income from the crop covers early costs. This is a simple but powerful measure that shows when the crop stops costing money and starts standing on its own.

Template 4.20 Cash neutral calculation

ITEM	CALCULATION	AMOUNT
Expected income per ha		
Annual operating cost per ha		
Net operating margin	Income – cost	

Template 4.21 Cash movement year-by-year

YEAR	INCOME	COSTS	NET CASH (INCOME – COST)	STATUS (NEGATIVE, POSITIVE, CASH NEUTRAL)
Year 0				
Year 1				
Year 2				
Year 3				
Year 4				

Interpretation

If net cash = 0 → cash neutral
If net cash > 0 → profitable
If net cash < 0 → crop still losing money

Payback period

Becoming 'cash neutral' is different from fully paying back start-up investment. This section helps the grower calculate how many years it will take for the crop to recover all start-up costs and early year losses. It is a key figure for long-term planning, and important for discussion with banks about lending.

Payback year = first year where cash is zero or positive since start of new investment

Template 4.22 Payback calculation table

YEAR	ESTABLISHMENT COST ($) A	OPERATING COSTS ($) B	TOTAL COST ($) C= A+B	INCOME ($) D	NET CASH ($) E=D-C	CUMULATIVE CASH ($) PREVIOUS CUMULATIVE +NET CASH
Year 0						0
Year 1						
Year 2						
Year 3						
Year 4						

Sensitivity and what-if tests

Farming is unpredictable. Prices, yields and costs can rise or drop. This section helps the grower test how the crop might perform under different conditions. It highlights risks and helps decide whether the crop will still be worth it under tougher future conditions.

Template 4.23 Sensitivity test

SCENARIO	CHANGE APPLIED	NET CASH
Price drops	-10%	
Yield drops	-20%	
Cost rise	+15%	
Price increases	+20%	

Partial Budget: What changes if I add this new option?

This section compares the new enterprise with what the grower is currently doing. It focuses only on the income and costs that will change if the grower proceeds with their preferred diversification option. This worksheet will allow the grower to see whether the new option improves or tightens their cash flow.

Template 4.24 Income comparison

ITEM	CALCULATION	CURRENT ENTERPRISE ($/YEAR)	NEW ENTERPRISE ($/YEAR)	CHANGE (+/-)
Sales income from produce				
Other farm income				
Total farm income	**New income – current**			

Template 4.25 Operating cost comparison

ITEM	CALCULATION	CURRENT ENTERPRISE ($/YEAR)	NEW ENTERPRISE ($/YEAR)	CHANGE (+/-)
Total operating costs				
Total fixed costs				
Establishment costs (annualised if needed)				
Total costs	**New costs – current costs**			

Net cash flow comparison

Template 4.26 Summary table

ITEM	CALCULATION	AMOUNT ($/YEAR)
Net cash from current enterprise		
Net cash from new enterprise		
Net change in cash flow	New – Current	

4.3 How to talk to lenders

Lenders are primarily assessing the risk of lending money to the grower for a nominated reason, and the grower's capacity to repay. Lenders are often less interested in the idea itself, and more interested in whether the grower has a clear, realistic and well-tested plan.

Early engagement with a lender can be valuable to understand what level of borrowing might be feasible before the grower commits significant time, energy and cost to developing a full Farm Diversification Plan.

Lenders typically want to see:

- A clear description of the proposed change and why it is being made
- Realistic financial projections for the new option (e.g. cash flow, profit, timing to break-even)
- Evidence that the assumptions are based on reality, not just made up (e.g. prices, yields, costs)
- Sensitivity analysis (e.g. what happens if prices fall, input costs rise, or yields are lower than expected?)
- Current financial position (e.g. debt levels, debt to equity, debt servicing history)
- Track record and capability of the grower means they are likely to succeed (e.g. skills, experience, team)
- A steady, staged plan to transition the farm from 'now' to 'future', not 'rip everything up tomorrow and start from scratch'.

Lenders often ask:

- How will this change improve your ability to service debt?
- What are the main risks and how will you manage them?
- What is your fallback position if the new option underperforms?
- How much additional capital do you think you will need beyond this loan? And where are you getting it from?
- What assumptions have you made about water, labour and input costs? Have you tested variations of those?
- Who else has reviewed, critiqued or advised on this plan? Have you sought high quality feedback?

Common reasons lenders refuse a loan request:

- Unrealistic assumptions about prices, costs, or timelines
- Insufficient existing equity, or high existing debt levels versus equity
- Lack of evidence for market demand, or fuzzy pathway to market for the new option
- High exposure to a single risk (e.g. water price, one buyer)
- Overly complex, novel or untested enterprise for the grower's capability
- No clear contingency plan if things go wrong.

Interaction with the lender does not stop at loan approval. There will be an ongoing relationship as the lender needs to ensure the money is being used wisely and will generate sufficient return to repay the debt.

Lenders usually require regular financial reporting and may monitor the farm business' performance against projections that were provided in the business case, particularly in the early years of a new enterprise. Where a business is under pressure, lenders may seek more frequent updates or impose additional conditions.

A transparent and proactive relationship with the lender can be beneficial. Growers who communicate early, track their performance, and demonstrate that they understand their numbers are more likely to maintain lender confidence if conditions change.

Mental health support tailored to growers
It is important for growers to seek additional support to talk through anxiety, stress and the pressures they may experience.

There are many resources and supports available such as Rural Aid, ifarmwell, and the National Centre for Farmer Health. Encourage the grower to talk to people they trust if they need a hand.

5 Grower's Final Check

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Where the thinking becomes a more detailed and concrete plan for action

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- Reasons for exiting
- Resources
- Service providers

"Measure twice, cut once."

- Attributed to J. Florio[47]

Overview

By this point in the conversation, growers will have a clear picture of what they want for their future, what the farm can reasonably support, and which diversification ideas they want to pursue. They will have a Farm Diversification Plan and Business Case, and be ready to talk with lenders, if capital is required.

The next step is: STOP and check.

At this stage, service providers play a central role in helping the grower to test, refine and improve their Plan. Remember that the unexamined or overlooked details can often upset an otherwise sound plan of action.

"A lot of small decisions can lead to bigger consequences."

(Extension Officer)

5.1 Refine the plan

Refining the Farm Diversification Plan is where the thinking becomes a more detailed and concrete plan for action. For growers, this often means looping back to check whether the ideas still stack up once the details are examined. For service providers, it is about guiding this process in a structured, supportive way.

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Growers may need to:

- Review the plan using the Grower Workbook templates and checklists, to see where more detail or clarity is needed.
- Crunch the numbers in more detail, including capital needs, timing, cash flow, labour peaks, and any unfamiliar costs and processes associated with new crops (e.g. certification, packaging, waste management).
- Seek high quality specialist advice (e.g. financial, legal, agronomic, water, markets), so decisions are made with a solid understanding of all implications. This advice might cost money.
- Revisit conversations with business partners or family members, especially where succession, shared finances, shared workload, or an exit from farming might also be part of the long-term picture.
- Reach out to the wider supply chain and community of growers to test, understand and start to establish the network required for reliable access to inputs and pathways to market.
- Push the limits on assumptions ('sensitivity testing') to see whether the numbers still stack up if something goes badly (e.g. key inputs get more expensive, weather significantly disrupts production, grower has a health issue).

At this stage, the refined plan should not feel final. Instead, it should feel more grounded and realistic than the first draft. This will provide the growers with a clearer path toward actionable next steps and get them more accustomed to constantly revisiting and tweaking their plan as they learn more.

It is important for the grower to get used to having their finger on the pulse, as they learn to read a new set of farming conditions and networks.

Stay tuned – farming conditions move faster than they used to

[47] Attributed to Florio, J (1591) Second Frutes. "Alwaies measure manie, before you cut anie". www.resolutejohnflorio.com/jonh-florio-second-fruits/

5.2 Using the plan to guide change

To get the best out of the Farm Diversification Plan, the grower needs to regularly review their progress. This can be done quarterly or every six months and could tie in with a grower's regular review of their financial position. Set a date to complete the first review of the Farm Diversification Plan.

The review process aims to keep the grower on track and allows them to adjust course as conditions change. If progress towards the new farm does not match the plan, or circumstances change in a substantial way, the grower is encouraged to go back to basics and update their plan.

The grower can also look at coming tasks and prepare for them with a question like: What are your next priorities? Do they still line up with achieving your planned future farm?

5.3 Connect and learn from others

Many winegrape growers already have valuable connections, both formal and informal, who support their winegrape enterprise (e.g. peers, advisors, suppliers, industry groups). Service providers can play a critical role in helping growers navigate beyond this network and should encourage growers to access a few different perspectives to check the information they are getting is accurate.

Diversification into something new becomes easier when growers can see what works in practice, hear honest stories and build a network of people they trust. Established growers of the new crop will have learnt many lessons along the way and will also have connections that can enable new growers to succeed.

There are usually many sources of 'free' information and knowledge across the community that growers can tap into if they are prepared to 'show their hand' and talk with others about what they are planning to diversify into.

For example, the industry association might give the grower guidance on whether certain varieties are in demand or heading toward a glut. Service providers can help create these opportunities in ways that feel less formal, more practical, and are locally relevant.

Figure 5.1 As your diversification plan takes shape, seek opportunities to get information and feedback wherever you can.



Peer to peer exchange

Honest conversations between growers are one of the strongest supports available. Shed talks, small group discussions and informal peer mentoring help growers reflect on what is possible and identify pitfalls to avoid. Many growers rely on 'phone a friend' relationships with trusted neighbours or friends, who are prepared to share what they have learned.



Seeing is believing

Site visits, case study farms, and demonstration trials offer growers the chance to see systems in action. Structured question and answer sessions, guided reflection, and follow-up conversations help people translate what they see into decisions they can use on their own farm.



Small group facilitated sessions, kitchen table conversations

These kinds of formats allow growers and service providers to work through checklists together, think aloud about finances or risk, and tackle the sensitive but important conversations around succession, exit or wellbeing.



Layered learning material

Short fact sheets, videos, podcasts and templates allow growers and service providers to keep learning between conversations. People learn in different ways, so diverse resources and useful. Linking these resources within the Guide offers a reliable, region-specific knowledge base.

5.4 Finding ongoing support

Diversification requires a mixture of technical, business, and personal support. In most cases, this involves drawing on skills and expertise beyond what a single organisation or person can provide.

Once a grower is clear about their Farm Diversification Plan, growers may benefit from establishing a small, trusted support team they can rely on. A well-structured support team not only assists growers in managing risks but also provides ongoing advice and encouragement as they establish their new business.

As a service provider, your role is to help growers identify and understand their existing network, strengthen connections where needed, and ensure they can access the right guidance at the right time. You might also direct growers to other specialists or resources, if additional expertise is required.

This process provides an opportunity to clarify your own role (e.g. what advice you can offer, where your responsibilities begin and end, and who else may need to be involved) to ensure support is coordinated, practical, and aligned with the grower's goals.

Helpful contacts

Table 5.1 outlines the types of service providers and community supports that winegrape growers might choose to access as they plan farm diversification.

Table 5.2 lists rural financial counselling service providers who can help growers look at their financial position, and guide growers towards additional advice and support to plan next steps.

Table 5.3 has details for the peak industry body groups who support and guide winegrape growers in the three inland regions.

Table 5.4 lists many of the industry associations that can offer support, information and guidance for growers considering a new crop option. The associations listed are for the crop options described in this Tool, but many other associations exist for other options, and all will likely offer useful information and access to networks for the new grower.

Table 5.1 Service providers who can support winegrape growers to diversify

Role	What they do
FINANCIAL AND LEGAL ADVISORS	
Rural financial counsellors (RFC) (see Table 4.2 for details)	• Support growers under financial stress to assess options, budgets and exit pathways; • Government-funded via Rural Financial Counselling Service presence in the Riverina and Murray Valley; • Rural Business Support in the Riverland.
Rural bankers	• Provide refinance or restructure advice for viable farm businesses; • Employed by major agribusiness banks; • Often engage through grower associations or RFC referrals.
Accountants / legal or succession advisors	• Assist with tax, business structure, inheritance/estate and transition planning; • May have wide exposure to/examples of successful farm businesses; • Private regional firms; useful for (older) growers considering handover or sale/exit.
TECHNICAL AND PRODUCTION EXPERTS	
Respected neighbour	• Experienced grower of the new crop; • May share technical learnings/tips and potential pitfalls of developing new crop, establishment costs, intel on agents/pathways to market, access to key people/network; • May co-operate on use of machinery, aggregate crop for transport to market efficiencies.

Role	What they do
TECHNICAL AND PRODUCTION EXPERTS (*continued*)	
Reseller agronomists	• Advice on crop options, soil health and input planning; • Employed by agri-supply retailers; • Familiar technical contacts for Riverina and Riverland growers.
Extension or technical officers	• Translate research and market insights into on-ground advice; • Some from State Departments of Agriculture, University outreach/ project; • Some employed direct or contract by Peak Industry Bodies in each region. This includes the CCW Co-op Transformation and Innovation Officer in the Riverland.
Farm resilience, drought and climate advisors	• Help growers assess risks and build long-term plans for viability and adaptation; • Ad-hoc government or national resource management (NRM)-funded project roles, regionally based.
WATER AND RESOURCE MANAGERS	
Water corporation/trust or irrigation-scheme officers	• Advise on water-entitlement sales, leases and compliance; • Administer water accounts and delivery infrastructure (Central Irrigation Trust, Lower Murray Water, Murrumbidgee Irrigation).
BUSINESS AND MARKET ADVISORS	
Agribusiness consultants	• Guide growers through business analysis, supply chain options; • Ad-hoc, private or government-contracted advisors working regionally.
Economic, industry or regional development officers	• Facilitate structural adjustment and attract investment; • Employed by councils or regional development bodies (e.g. Regional Development Australia); • Administer funding programs, active regional transition planning. The CCW Co-op Transformation and Innovation Officer in the Riverland also covers this.
COMMUNITY AND WELLBEING SUPPORT	
Mental health and wellbeing workers	• Provide counselling and crisis support for growers in distress; • Government health service or charity/volunteer/NGO-based.
Community / farm resilience officers	• Coordinate social and recovery programs and link growers with local supports; • Employed by councils or recovery programs; • Active across all three regions but often on ad-hoc funding in response to crisis conditions.
INDUSTRY AND LEARNING NETWORKS	
Winegrape grower associations (see Table 4.2 for details)	• Represent and advocate for growers, provide communication and technical networks; • Usually member-funded.
Other grower associations (see Table 4.4 for details)	• Exist for many crop options, some are national representative associations (e.g. dried fruit, almonds). • Represent and advocate for growers, provide communication and technical networks. • Some of these groups are well functioning and effective/helpful, some are less effective

Table 5.2 Rural financial counselling services

REGION	ORGANISATION	WEBSITE
Riverland	Rural Business Support	www.ruralbusinesssupport.org.au
Murray Valley	RFCS Victoria West	wswrcs.com.au
Riverina	RFCS New South Wales	rfcsnsw.org.au/counsellors

Table 5.3 Peak industry bodies for winegrape

REGION	ORGANISATION	WEBSITE
Murray Valley	Murray Valley Winegrowers Inc.	www.mvwi.com.au
Riverina	Riverina Winegrape Growers	riverinawinegrapes.com.au
Riverland	Riverland Wine	riverlandwine.com.au

Table 5.4 Peak industry bodies for alternative crops

CROP	ORGANISATION	WEBSITE
Pistachios	Pistachio Grower's Association	www.pgai.com.au
Jujubes	South Australian Jujube Growers Association	www.australianjujubes.com.au
Dried fruits	Dried Fruits Australia	driedfruitsaustralia.org.au
Asparagus	Australian Asparagus Council	www.asparagus.com.au
Melon	Melons Australia	www.melonsaustralia.org.au
Carbon Farming	Clean Energy Regulator	cer.gov.au
Solar Panels	Clean Energy Council	cleanenergycouncil.org.au

5.5 Additional support

When looking to diversify, there are additional programs and organisations that can support growers as they plan and implement change. They can provide growers with tools, training, business support, and wellbeing services so growers aren't navigating the transition alone.

They also give service providers a clear network to draw on when growers need more than one kind of help. Do not underestimate the mental load and emotional cost to growers of stepping away from something familiar and taking new risks.

The list of resources in Table 5.5 will likely be overwhelming for growers who are just starting to consider their options. Service providers can potentially keep the following list of resources for latter stages in the diversification planning process and review it with the grower as information or support needs evolve.

Growers should also be encouraged to access funding support to engage with external expertise and pay for training through the Farm Household Allowance Activity Supplement. As of 2026, that supplement was $10,000 per person, and available through Services Australia as part of the Farm Household Allowance program.

Table 5.5 State-specific resources available for growers as they plan farm diversification

PROGRAM	NSW	VIC	SA
Farm Business Resilience Program	Farm Business Resilience Program, DroughtHub NSW	Agriculture Victoria Farm Business Resilience Program	Wine Grape Council of SA Farm Business Resilience Program (GrowStrong)
Regional Development Australia (RDA)	RDA Riverina	RDA Murraylands and Riverlands	RDA Murraylands and Riverlands
Business management and development support	Family Business Association – courses available	Family Business Association – courses available	Family Business Association – courses available Family and Business (FaB) Mentors – a free service provided by PIRSA
Winegrape Grower Support			South Australia specific support for winegrape growers from PIRSA
Mental health and wellbeing services	National Centre for Farmer Health - NSW	National Centre for Farmer Health - Victoria	Drought Mental Health Support – SA National Centre for Farmer Health - South Australia

Table 5.6 National and general resources available for growers as they plan farm diversification

AGENCY	PROGRAM
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) and others	· Support for wine industry impacted by red grape oversupply · Various Australian Government Rural Support Initiatives
Business.gov.au	· Information on funding, permits, planning, and resources for small businesses, including farm enterprises.
Australian Wine Research Institute (AWRI)	· Guidance on 'resting' your vineyard – taking a year or two out from growing might give the grower time to reflect and reset before deciding to diversify, continue or exit.
Mental health and wellbeing services	· iFarmWell – mental health support and self-help tools for farmers and their families. · National Centre for Farmer Health (NCFH) – education, resources and support to help improve the health, wellbeing and safety of farmers and rural communities. With hubs in South Australia, Victoria, and New South Wales · Rural Aid – offer confidential phone or on-farm counselling; may also provide financial assistance, fodder, or water in emergencies. · TIACS (This Is A Conversation Starter) – free phone and text counselling for blue-collar workers, including farmers. · Rural Health Connect – a platform that links individuals in rural and regional areas to psychologists through phone or video calls.

5.6 Want to exit?

"If the well is dry, best stop pumping."

(Old agricultural saying)

For some growers, exploring diversification may lead to the conclusion that there is no viable alternative in their current circumstance. This may reflect sustained market pressure, high debt levels, water insecurity, capital constraints, or changes in personal or family priorities. While this can be a difficult conclusion to reach, it is an important and legitimate outcome of the diversification planning process.

In these situations, exiting winegrape growing, or farming altogether, can be the best choice. Exit should be understood as **a form of transition, not failure**. For many growers, it takes time to get used to it, but exit can represent a:

- Good opportunity to stabilise finances
- Chance to improve wellbeing, interpersonal connections and quality of life
- Pathway into new work, retirement, or alternative business opportunities.

Like diversification, exit pathways are highly dependent on individual business circumstances and can take a variety of forms. These might include:

- Selling the farm business 'as is', as a going concern
- Selling off equipment, water and assets, and staying on the land
- Selling land
- A staged and gradual wind-down of operations over time, prior to staying on the land or selling.

As of June 2026, there is no dedicated financial support available to assist winegrape growers to exit the industry or to remove vines, despite vineyard removal being a highly costly exercise. Growers can access a guide and costing tool HERE to help plan and cost vine removal.

Service providers can support growers by helping them clarify what type of exit is being considered, over what timeframe, and what success would look like for both the business and the individuals involved. It is important to approach this conversation with sensitivity, as stepping away from the land can be a profound personal transition.

Growers should be encouraged to plan for life after farming, considering alternative work, retirement, or new pursuits, and to prioritise wellbeing, purpose, and structure in the next chapter of their life.

Many of the templates in the Grower Workbook and the questions in the Discussion Tool can help growers to make sense of the assets they have, in preparation for exiting the industry. Lenders and estate agents will appreciate any work the grower does to make an inventory of the farm in preparation for exit.

Additional resources to assist with the transition to exiting winegrape growing include:

- Simple first steps if you are considering leaving the farm
- Farm Transitions Australia
- Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) – Farm Business Transition Resources
- Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA) – Succession Planning Resources
- Young Farmer Business Program – Succession Planning Toolkit
- iFarmWell – mental health support and self-help tools for farmers and their families
- Rural Health Connect – a platform that links individuals in rural and regional areas to psychologists through phone or video calls.

For those considering leaving farming or restructuring their farm business to sell, the support of service providers can be highly beneficial, for example:

1. Rural financial counsellor (to clarify options, identify supports, and who to contact next)
2. Community and mental-health support (to manage wellbeing)
3. Accountant (to assess likely final financial position after sale of farm)
4. Lawyer (to explain options and process for selling farm)
5. Bank (to plan financial steps, acquit outstanding loans, manage balance of funds)
6. Land valuer and real estate agent (to price farm, advertise, and sell or lease out land)
7. Water corporation or trust representative (to sell or rescind water rights).

There is no universal 'right answer' but there is a **right decision for you** and your personal circumstances



