



5

Sustainable food culture

“Imagine if most of your food was grown and produced right here in our valley!”

Imagine if you knew the grower, you knew the source of the seed, and that the farming practices were sustainable.”

5.1 History and background

The Samford area has a long history of agriculture. The first lease of land in Samford occurred in 1865 and settlers began moving in, with the initial sources of agricultural income being timber, dairying, bananas, small crops and fruit. Prior to the railway being established in 1919, farmers took their produce on horse-drawn carts over the hill towards Brisbane city.

Between 1926 and 1927 the Samford railway station had more bananas freighted by rail than any other part of Queensland. Disaster hit the banana industry in early 1930s with 'bunchy-top' virus, necessitating a Government order for all plantations to be destroyed. Dairying increased through the 1930s and the Samford area played an important role in producing significant volumes of vegetables for soldiers stationed in Brisbane during the Second World War.

Sales of farmland for housing development began in the 1960s and most land in Samford is now allocated to housing and parks/public space. Only a very small proportion of land in the Samford area is currently used for food growing on a commercial scale. Small-scale commercial agriculture currently includes pineapples, strawberries, lettuce and some beef cattle. Vegetables, fruit and herbs are commonly grown in backyards, but the bulk of food consumed in Samford is brought in from elsewhere.



Tomato crop at Camp Mountain



Harvest of bananas from Samford being transported by horse and buggy



Load of Samford-grown potatoes being taken to market



Large crop of peas at Wights Mountain

The bulk of food consumed in Samford is brought in from elsewhere.

5.2 Existing framework

The Samford region currently has a number of community groups with an interest in gardening and organic food growing and some organisations (both government and private) support food gardening education for backyard food growers. These groups and organisations all make a valuable contribution to small-scale food growing in Samford. These organisations and groups are:

- Cityfood Growers
- Samford Local Growers
- Samford Organic Growers

The local retailers in Samford do occasionally sell locally grown produce from backyard food growers in Samford, though the volume available is small and inconsistent.

5.3 Community aspirations

The concept of growing more food in the Samford region to create a greater level of food sustainability was a common aspiration in the survey of the Samford community. However, increasing food production so that it supplies a reasonable proportion of food eaten in Samford will be challenging, not because of the climate, water availability, soil or lack of land, but primarily because food growing on a commercial scale is not in the current culture of the Samford residents or business community.

A Food Group was established in late 2011 as part of the ViVa Samford Futures community process to explore opportunities to create a more sustainable food supply. A summary of the ideas from that Food Group are shown in the diagram in Appendix 4 titled 'Samford Sustainable Food Growers', which can be found at www.samfordfutures.org. These ideas include a proposal to develop an urban agriculture site in the Samford Parklands and the planting of food plants along recreational trails.



I'd like to see organic fruit and veg growing in more backyards.

5.4 Urban agriculture explained

Growing food on a small scale in and around cities is a burgeoning movement around the world to supplement our food system and strengthen local communities and economies. Agriculture is normally associated with larger scale production by farmers, but the term urban agriculture is evolving as the interest in working with models of intensive organic food growing in smaller spaces in and around cities creates the potential for urban food growers to become urban farmers.

The foods most commonly grown in urban agriculture are vegetables, mushrooms, herbs, fruit trees, honey and eggs. This produce could also be transformed locally into processed food. Foods such as dairy products, meats, grains, nuts, grapes and oils are considered more suitable larger scale farms and not commonly grown in urban agriculture.



Local grower tending the vegetable crop



Local growers at a compost-making workshop in Samford



A market garden in a peri-urban location is one type of urban farm



5.4.1 Models of urban agriculture

Urban agriculture models normally share these characteristics:

- Organic growing methods are most commonly used.
- The produce is made available locally where it is grown.
- The food is sold freshly picked.
- Growing is done most commonly outside in the ground, but raised beds systems, and growing on podiums or balconies, are also common. Growing in greenhouses is also popular out of season. Aquaponics and indoor vertical growing systems can also be used.

The most common (and usually not commercial) models of urban agriculture include:

- backyard and balcony/podium food growing
- community gardens on public land
- school food gardens.

Not so common, but expanding and commercially oriented models of urban agriculture include:

- urban farms on unused/unproductive private and public land in and around cities, typically on areas from 0.5 to 5 acres.
- urban farms on industrial space with indoor growing methods such as large greenhouses.
- aggregating the production of many small growers.

Given the abundance of unproductive public and private land in the Samford district, and particularly the unique opportunity to make use of some of the Samford Parklands, the most appropriate model to expand food production is 'Urban farms on private and public land'. This model is the core focus of the proposal for Samford described below.



A diversity of food can be produced locally and sold freshly picked



Harvesting vegetables from an urban farm

5.5 Urban Farming Centre – Samford Parklands

The proposal for an ‘Urban Farming Centre’ to be located on part of the Samford Parklands provides a wonderful opportunity to stimulate a resurgence of commercially sustainable food production in Samford and, in the process, contribute to a wider participation in community-based food growing.

5.5.1 The function of the Centre

- Intensive organic food growing on approximately 10–15 acres of land
- Conduct training courses on urban agriculture to support the development of urban farmer entrepreneurs
- Provide ongoing support for urban farmer entrepreneurs to establish a chain of urban farms on private and public land in the Samford region
- Sell farm produce
- Food processing
- Research into urban agriculture
- Community composting
- Provide community allotments
- Reduce local food waste by selling and/or processing surpluses from hobby growers in Samford.

The Samford Parklands site provides an excellent combination of land and buildings as a base for the Urban Farming Centre.

5.5.2 Land and structures required

The Samford Parklands site provides an excellent combination of land and buildings as a base for the Urban Farming Centre. The exact location of the Centre on the land is yet to be finalised, but preliminary consultations with Council indicate:

- Land – Portions of land on the southern and northern sides of the buildings precinct as well as land on Gibbons Road/ across the river from the buildings.
- Buildings – One cool room, one building for the produce stall and food preparation, a shed for farming equipment, greenhouse for seedling propagation and an office and classroom area.

5.5.3 Contribution to Samford and the wider community

- Provide fresh food
- Provide education for locals and people from Brisbane or further afield
- Reduce the need for all fresh food to be brought into Samford from long distances, creating greater diversity and sustainability of food supply
- Maximise the use of abundant local land
- Create employment
- Stimulate community engagement in urban food growing
- Raise the profile and awareness of locally grown food.
- Stimulate the cultural engagement to locally grown food and food entrepreneurialism
- Provide Samford residents with continuous opportunities to engage and learn about food growing, seeing the consistent benefits and thereby inspire them to grow more of their own food and support endeavours around locally grown food.

See the consistent benefits and thereby inspire them to grow more of their own food and support endeavours around locally grown food.

- Become a tourist attraction for Samford, benefit existing retailers and strengthen the local economy

- Protect and improve environment and reduce our local food carbon footprint
- Contribute to improved health with fresher food
- Demonstrate our local commitment to food sustainability.

5.5.4 Land management principles

The land will be managed with a combination of organic, biodynamic and Permaculture principles. It is vital that the core ethic of land management is long-term sustainability and integration with other environmental initiatives being undertaken both in the Samford Parklands and any natural resources connected to the site.

5.5.5 Moreton Bay Regional Council opportunities

- **Food sustainability** – The Centre provides Moreton Bay Regional Council with the opportunity to be at the forefront of food sustainability in Australia by enabling public land on the Samford Parklands site to be used for an urban agriculture activity, providing commercial, environmental and community benefits. Principles developed could be duplicated to other public land in the Moreton Shire and may also inform how private land could be considered for urban farming.
- **CSIRO land maximisation** – Enables the Council to support a constructive use of the CSIRO land to create significant community and local economy benefit.

5.5.6 Research sources

Further information is provided in a document titled 'Urban Farming Centre – Samford'. This document can be accessed at www.samfordfutures.org.

5.6 Food plants along recreational trails

This concept was developed to support the ViVa Futures People Movement group's initiative of improving the attractiveness of the many walking trails around Samford. It would involve planting food plants, including native bush tucker species, along recreational trails.

The major challenge with this initiative is garnering the public support to care for the food plants. For this reason, it is suggested that an achievable starting point would be to have food plants along the walking path from Samford Village to the Parklands tennis courts. A large part of this trail would run close to the Urban Farming Centre and people involved and supporting the Centre could help with care of the food plants on the trail. It is hoped that, out of this activity, a community group would form to widen the planting and care of food plants along other Samford recreational trails.

5.7 Twilight market

Selling locally grown food at the proposed twilight market (see Section 3.4.4) for Samford would provide another outlet for the produce from the Urban Farm Centre, any urban farms operated by the Centre trainees and local hobby growers.



Our vision for action

- Hold a community meeting to discuss the proposal, refine the concepts and build support to expand the current group of people interested in developing sustainable food culture.
- Form a community-owned enterprise to carry forward the urban farming concept with the support of the Samford community
- Establish an Urban Farming Centre on the Samford Parklands, which has benefits for the local community, environment and economy.
- Community members and Council to provide access to machinery, skilled people and funding and to assist with land preparation and structures.
- Plant food trees and bushes along recreational trails in partnership with the community and Council.



Local native food species such as macadamias can be planted along recreational trails

Everyone's future

Want to get involved or find out more? Visit the website for further resources, links and updated info.

www.samfordfutures.org