

Clarence Valley Food Inc.



Champion:

Debrah Novak

Age of incorporated association:

Three years

Industry:

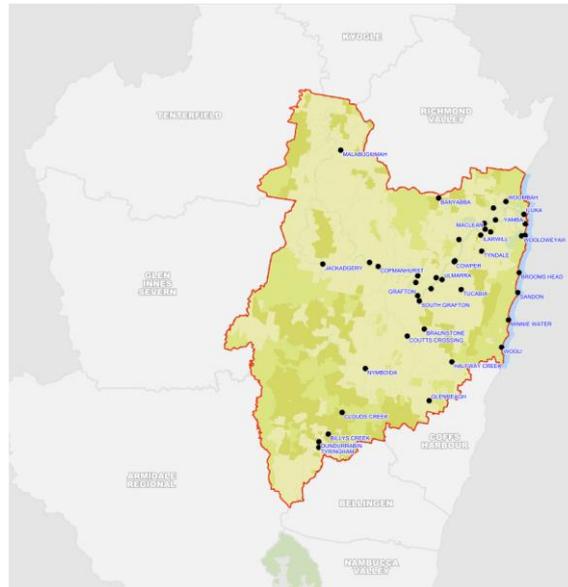
Represents mixed industries

Location:

Clarence Valley NSW

Region:

agricultural-fed economy, also includes tourism for the combination of coastal and country towns.



Clarence Valley Food Inc. (CFVI) is all about the Clarence Valley agri-food economy. The region is uniquely positioned between Byron Bay and Coffs Harbour and is the food jewel of the North Coast crown. Through collaboration, networking, events, leadership and education CVFI's priority is to connect consumers back to their food source and provide a platform for discussion to showcase and grow our local produce sector, cafes, growers, products and manufacturers. Farming Together helped Clarence Valley Food Inc. with strategic and business planning as part of their future growth strategy.

The Catalyst for Change

- Debrah saw there was a need to connect the community with the amazing diversity of food produced in the Clarence region.
- When the Yamba farmers market came up for tender, Debrah saw the potential: no one was willing to apply for the tender, there were few stalls and there were many non-compliant practices.
- Debrah was approached to take over the Grafton Farmers Market. Again, Debrah saw the potential in shifting sites and the time to suit the community.
- The Clarence Valley Correctional Centre had no local procurement policy for using local produce.



The Opportunity

- Establishment of Clarence Valley Food Inc as the representative voice of primary producers in the region.
- Developed a Farmers Market Policy for the Clarence Valley Council.
- Established a farmers' market delivery service (as a response to the Covid-19 situation).
- Documented a set of 'market rules' to ensure consistency, clear communication and understanding for stall holders and shoppers. Follows NSW guidelines. Gives confidence to the consumer.
- Utilised a strong business model to grow the markets into a popular and thriving enterprise.
- Lobbied for government support to get a 30% local procurement policy secured for the Clarence Valley Correctional Centre.

Success Story: *the numbers so far*

Yamba Market:

- Growth from 15 to 44 stalls in 2-years since takeover.
- Increase in patronage from approximately 200 to 250 people.
- Generates 4 – 5 million dollars annually into the local economy.

Grafton Market:

- Morning market transformed from 7 stalls with 200 patrons to 25 stalls and 1500 patrons in just 2-weeks after takeover.

Local Procurement Policy:

- 30% local procurement policy for the Clarence Valley Correctional Centre secured providing local growers certainty in supply arrangements.

Hot tips!

Be consistent: for your stall-holders and patrons. This builds capacity, trust and wellbeing.

Set clear expectations, and communicate these effectively. This includes "no gossiping!"

The Challenges

- Negotiating with all parties to ensure everyone's needs are met.
- Ensuring that everyone follows the rules and policies.

The Enablers

- Looking for grant funding opportunities to support the organisations supporting local growers e.g. finding funding for a cold storage facility for the CV Correctional Centre to keep the local produce.
- Digital technology provides a means to connect with people and keep track of your produce. It can save time and develop the potential of your farm.
- Support, educate and up-skill stall-holders e.g. developing their own branding and displaying at the markets.
- Ensure actions are based on evidence e.g. keep records of weekly numbers etc.

Future Looking

- **Set up some rules, a framework and a policy** at a local government level to support and protect the wishes of those in the sector. This further ensures clear communication and that everyone knows the expectations.
- **Keep connected with your community.** Ensure they know they are being heard and supported. Utilise digital technology to connect: keep updated, stay informed and track your produce and other data.
- **Embrace Change:** Adapt, adopt and be fearless in what you want to do!