



An Australian Government Initiative



Regional
Development
Australia
LODDON MALLEE



Regional Development Australia Loddon Mallee

International Engagement Strategy 2026 - 2030

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we live. We recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

We acknowledge that the Loddon Mallee region is on traditional lands, including those lands of the First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee (being Latji Latji, Ngintait and Nyeri Nyeri Traditional Owners), the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagalk Nations and Dja Dja Wurrung, Wurundjeri, Taungurung and Yorta Yorta People, as well as other Traditional Owner groups in Victoria who are not formally recognised.

We acknowledge the diversity of Aboriginal Victorians, their communities and cultures, the intrinsic connection to Country, the contribution and interest of Aboriginal people and organisations in developing a prosperous region. We are committed to advancing the principles of Aboriginal self-determination and supporting communities to realise self-determined economic development objectives.

We support initiatives that encourage greater unity, knowledge, cultural awareness and respect for the first occupants of our land.

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1. Introduction

Loddon Mallee – Victoria’s largest region by land area, contributes over \$23 billion to the state economy and is poised to amplify its impact on the global stage. With world-class agricultural production, growing strengths in clean energy, advanced manufacturing, and tourism, the region is well-equipped to translate international engagement into tangible local outcomes.

1.1. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide strategic direction to support the Loddon Mallee region’s international engagement activity, guiding cross-government and industry collaboration efforts to create economic, social and cultural value for the region.

The document outlines the vision, objectives, strategic priorities, engagement principles, and measures of success, providing a benchmark to coordinate, evaluate, and amplify outcomes.

Key goals of the Strategy include:



Coordinated, placed-based actions

Support Regional Development Australia’s (RDA’s) role in aligning international initiatives across the region to maximise impact.



Global visibility and reputation

Enable the region to be recognised as connected, innovative and an investment-ready region.



Regional capability and readiness

Equip the region to compete, scale and respond to evolving global opportunities.



Sustainable growth

Strengthen efforts for trade facilitation and promotion to support priority market entry and expansion, investment attraction, skills development and cultural exchange.



Inclusive partnership

Embed First Nations and community-led perspectives in international collaborations.



Effective governance and collaboration

Strengthen RDA’s capacity to engage stakeholders, adapt to changing circumstances and sustain long-term initiatives.

2. Context and Engagement Principles

2.1. Why International Engagement Matters for Loddon Mallee

International engagement is not merely a growth lever, it is a **strategic enabler of resilience, diversification, and regional identity**. The region's economic future depends on its ability to **translate global trends into local opportunity**, particularly in the face of commodity price volatility, climate and water stress, workforce shortages, youth retention challenges, infrastructure and digital connectivity gaps. Done strategically, international engagement can:

- **Diversify priority export markets** and reduce reliance on single-country demand cycles (e.g. China, India).
- **Attract inbound investment to strengthen regional capability** and accelerate infrastructure, innovation, and workforce development, with a particular focus on clean energy and AgTech.
- **Foster resilience** through partnerships that address shared challenges like decarbonisation, water scarcity, and food security.
- **Strengthen people-to-people ties** via tourism, education, including international student alumni, diaspora networks, and cultural diplomacy.
- **Drive new product development and innovation** through global research collaboration, technology transfer and exposure to new markets. Build regional reputation and position Loddon Mallee as a globally aware, regionally confident economy.



Photo source: DJPR Hattah 2020

2.2. Loddon Mallee Region Snapshot

The two sub-regions of Loddon Mallee require differentiated approaches to international engagement

Characteristic	Mallee sub-region	Loddon Campaspe sub-region
Local Government Authorities (LGAs)	Mildura, Swan Hill, Gannawarra, Buloke	Greater Bendigo, Macedon Ranges, Mount Alexander, Central Goldfields, Campaspe, Loddon
Population	~120,000; low growth (0.3% from 2019–23)	~257,300; strong growth (4.1% from 2019–23)
Economic Drivers	Horticulture, irrigation, agriculture, food processing, hay (fodder), tourism, renewable energy, mineral sands	Horticulture, advanced manufacturing, health, higher education, clean economy, mining
Main Export Profile	Almonds, citrus fruits, table grapes, grains, hay, wine, olives and olive oil, tomatoes, mineral sands	Wine and viticulture products, gourmet food products, grain, livestock, food processing outputs
Strategic Assets	• High-volume agriculture • Irrigation infrastructure • Mineral resources • Renewable energy potential • Transport and export access (proximity to Melbourne ports and Mildura airport).	• Bendigo Regional Employment Precinct • Food production and processing • Tertiary education • Value-add food processing facilities • Circular economy initiatives • Gold and antimony mining • Transport infrastructure (road and rail connections to Melbourne and ports for export access).
Strategic levers	• Export Maximisation: Expand international market access for horticulture, cereals, and pulses. • Value-Add Processing: Support agri-processing to increase margins on commodity exports. • Renewable Energy Development: Position the region as a hub for clean energy investment and technology exports. • Innovation and Collaboration: Foster partnerships between AgTech, food processing, and research institutions. • Infrastructure and Logistics: Strengthen transport and export channels to improve efficiency. • Regional Branding and Trade Missions: Promote Mallee as a reliable, high-volume supplier of premium agricultural products and value-add products.	• Export Development: Support wine, premium foods, and meat producers to access overseas markets. • Branding and Reputation: Position Bendigo and surrounding areas as high-quality food, wine, and cultural hubs. • Innovation and Collaboration: Foster partnerships between AgTech, food processing, and research institutions. • Cultural and First Nations Engagement: Leverage unique heritage in tourism and cultural exchange. • Investment Attraction: Targeted campaigns for advanced manufacturing, agribusiness, and food processing investors.

Established international relationships include

Category	Details
Place Branding	- UNESCO recognition already strengthens the region's global profile, with Bendigo designated a City of Gastronomy and the Goldfields region preparing a bid for World Heritage status. - These international designations provide powerful branding platforms to showcase the region's cultural heritage, food systems, and creative industries to global audiences.
Export Relationships	- China, India, Japan, South Korea, Singapore: key export markets for almonds, wine, citrus, and meat. - Vietnam, Indonesia, UAE: emerging markets for dairy, processed foods, and grains. - USA and Europe: premium wine, table grapes, wood products, and tourism.
Investment Links	- International capital invested in horticulture (almonds, dried fruit) and renewable energy (solar and wind farms in the Mallee region). - Foreign-owned entities active in wine production, food processing, and agri-logistics around Mildura and Swan Hill. - Regional health and aged care facilities co-financed by international investors. - Defence, manufacturing and mining.
Education and Research	- Higher education and research institutes currently support student exchanges and collaborative research partnerships with Asian and European institutions in agriculture, climate adaptation, and regional development, as well as international students from key markets including India, China, Kuwait, Vietnam, Canada. - TAFE and VET providers not only attract international students from India, China, and Southeast Asia in applied skills areas aligned with regional industry needs, but are also developing international partnerships that deliver specialised training and workforce development programs – for example, collaborations in automotive, engineering and AgTech that build global skills pathways into the region.
Diaspora and Community	- Longstanding Chinese, Italian, Greek, Indian, and Pacific Islander communities contributing to agriculture, manufacturing, and business. - Pacific Labour Scheme supports seasonal workers in horticulture and food production in the Mallee region. - Migration is contributing to population growth and workforce sustainability in regional towns such as Mildura, Swan Hill, Bendigo, and Castlemaine.¹

¹ Regional Australia Institute (2023), Population Mobility and Regional Migration, regionalaustralia.org.au.

2.3. Engagement Principles

The strategy is underpinned by seven core principles:

- 1. Place-defined and Locally-led:**
Anchor engagement in the distinct economic profiles and priorities of Mallee and Loddon Campaspe.
- 2. Strategic and Systems-oriented:**
Target areas where Loddon Mallee holds a competitive edge such as infrastructure, workforce, and climate resilience.
- 3. Reciprocal and Regenerative:**
Build partnerships that foster shared learning, co-investment, and joint innovation, positioning the region as a contributor to global solutions.
- 4. Networked and Multi-scalar:**
Cultivate trusted relationships across government, industry, academia, and civil society, while leveraging diaspora, city-region partnerships, and global forums to expand reach.
- 5. Catalytic Leadership by Government and Industry:**
Leverage the convening power and global networks of government, peak industry bodies, and major employers to open markets, broker partnerships, and enable smaller players to participate and benefit.
- 6. Aligned, Complementary and Resource-conscious:**
Coordinate international efforts with Victorian Government strategies and regional priorities to maximise impact, avoid duplication of effort, and efficiently leverage local partners, policy levers and infrastructure support.
- 7. Impact-focused and Value Adding:**
Concentrate engagement where collective effort delivers the greatest regional uplift, maximises value creation and generates lasting social and economic benefits.



2.4. Alignment with Victorian Government Strategies and other Regional Strategic Plans

The Loddon Mallee International Engagement Strategy is aligned closely with the Victorian Government's broader economic, industrial, and climate agendas. It reinforces the State's commitment to regional economic development, global competitiveness, and the transition to a clean, inclusive economy. The strategy is designed to complement, rather than replace or update existing government strategies, including:

- Greater Bendigo Economic Development Strategy (2020-2030).
- Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR) Strategic Plan (2023-2027).
- Victorian Economic Growth Statement (2024).
- Yuma Yirramboi Victorian Aboriginal Employment and Economic Strategy (Invest in Tomorrow) (2022).
- Made in Victoria 2030: Manufacturing Statement.
- Victoria's Climate Change Strategy – road map to net zero by 2050.
- The Victorian Freight Plan 2025-2030: Victoria Delivers.
- Victorian Industry Policy (2025).
- Critical Minerals Strategy (2023–2030).
- Clean Economy and Climate Change Strategies.
- Victoria's China Strategy, India Strategy, Latin America Strategy and Southeast Asia Strategy
- Victorian Wine Strategy (2025-2030).
- Victorian Distilled Spirits Strategy (2025-2030).

This Strategy furthermore aims to complement the various strategic plans developed by Councils, First Nations, Industries and other partners in the region, acknowledging the inherent diversity in priorities and approaches. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Regional Development Australia Loddon Mallee Business Plan (2025-26).
- Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation Wuktjarrang – Trading Our Way Strategy.
- Loddon Shire Visitor Economy Strategy.
- Citrus Australia Strategic Plan 2023-2027.
- Hort Innovation Strategic Investment Plans.
- Australian Almond Position Reports.
- Regional Visitor Economy Partnerships.

3. Vision, Mission and Objectives

3.1. Vision

To turn global connections into local opportunity by forging purposeful international partnerships that unlock economic growth, resilience, and innovation across Loddon Mallee's diverse regional economy.

3.2. Mission

Enable the Loddon Mallee region to lead and participate in global engagement through coordinated, community-supported and industry-aligned efforts that deliver tangible benefits to regional communities.



4. Strategic Priorities

To achieve its vision, the Loddon Mallee region will concentrate international engagement efforts on four interconnected priority areas, placing emphasis on the first two:

4.1. Trade, Investment and Market Access

Expand Loddon Mallee's global economic footprint by accelerating export growth, attracting strategic investment and talent, and improving access to priority international markets. Focus areas include:

- Trade facilitation and promotion of Loddon Mallee's agricultural strengths in priority export markets, that drive commercial outcomes for businesses and industries. This includes supporting **established categories** (such as almonds, citrus, table grapes, hay/fodder, processed tomatoes) and **emerging categories** (such as olives, carrots, garlic, pulses, wine, alternative proteins), as well as sectors such as **critical minerals and AgTech**. This involves leveraging national and state outbound and inbound trade mission opportunities to deepen connections with buyers across diverse priority markets.
- **Strengthen opportunities in critical minerals and AgTech**, building on the region's innovation assets, growing industry capability, and alignment with global demand for sustainable solutions.
- **Support value-adding and innovative industries** such as agri-processing, food-processing, minerals, and renewables, to transition from raw production to value-added products, apply innovative approaches within existing sectors, enhance trade competitiveness, and contribute to the region's knowledge economy.
- **Position the region as an investment destination** for clean energy, food manufacturing, health, and aged care, supported by investment prospectuses and regional branding.²
- **Enhance export readiness** through digital capability development, market intelligence, compliance and quality assurance support, and cluster-based marketing that benefits both established and emerging exporters.³

4.2. Education, Skills and Talent Exchange

Build international pathways for talent, training, and mutually beneficial collaboration that meet regional workforce needs and strengthen global ties.

Focus areas include:

- **Attract international students and researchers** across the region's universities, research and innovation centres, TAFE and VET providers, with a focus on education-to-employment pathways and integration into the region's economic and social fabric.⁴
- **Facilitate global skills exchange and bilateral workforce mobility** by partnering with the Department of Home Affairs and engaging diasporas to address workforce shortages, including through visa pathways such as the PALM scheme.⁵
- **Position agriculture as a high-skill, tech-enabled career path**, shifting perceptions and aligning with next-generation workforce needs.

² Mallee Economic Growth Strategy, RDA Loddon Mallee.

³ Business Plan 2025-26, RDA Loddon Mallee.

⁴ Victoria's India Strategy: Our shared Future 2025-30, Victoria State Government.

⁵ Business Plan 2025-26, RDA Loddon Mallee.

4.3. Cultural Diplomacy, Tourism and Place Branding

Build Loddon Mallee's international identity through cultural exchange, tourism, and storytelling that reflect the region's diversity, heritage, and innovation. Focus areas include:

- **Amplify the Loddon Mallee identity** through coordinated digital storytelling, diaspora engagement, and international media platforms to position the region as a distinctive, globally connected destination and its industry, cultural and natural assets.⁶
- **Celebrate First Nations culture, UNESCO-recognised sites, and unique cultural heritage** (e.g. Chinese heritage, Dragon Museum) through international festivals, exchanges, and high-profile events.⁷
- **Boost international visitation** via promotion of the region's natural landscapes, waterways, heritage towns and gastronomic tourism experiences through targeted campaigns and infrastructure upgrades, leveraging assets such as UNESCO Creative City and Region of Gastronomy designation, local food and wine produce, and arts and cultural galleries and festivals.⁸
- **Invest in accommodation and visitor infrastructure**, including premium options, to meet international demand, improve quality and encourage longer stays.

4.4. Sustainability and Innovation

Position Loddon Mallee as a globally connected region addressing shared challenges in climate resilience, regenerative agriculture, and future industries. Focus areas include:

- **Establish international R&D and commercial partnerships** in AgTech, clean economy, and critical minerals, building on local innovation assets like Mallee Regional Innovation Centre, smart farms, TAFEs and La Trobe University.⁹
- **Pilot cross-border programs** in climate-smart farming, water security, and circular economy, building on the region's leadership in solar and renewables.¹⁰
- **Promote Loddon Mallee's contribution** to Victoria's net zero transition and critical minerals strategy through international collaboration and storytelling.¹¹

6 Business Plan 2025-26, RDA Loddon Mallee.

7 Extract Notes from Industry Roundtable Discussion – Strengthening international engagement through collaboration, 2025.

8 Mallee Economic Growth Strategy, RDA Loddon Mallee.

9 Mallee Economic Growth Strategy, RDA Loddon Mallee.

10 Business Plan 2025-26, RDA Loddon Mallee.

11 Victoria International Engagement Taskforce, Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

5. International Market and Sector Priorities

5.1. Market and Sector Priorities

Loddon Mallee's international engagement strategy should not only build on existing partnerships but also proactively pursue new and complementary international relationships. This section outlines key target **international markets** and **priority sectors** where Loddon Mallee has a competitive advantage, and how these align with the region's strategic goal: **turning global engagement into local opportunity**.

5.2. Priority International Markets

Priority partners

Market / Region	Rationale
North Asia (China, Japan, South Korea)	North Asia – including China (Victoria's most dominant market), Japan , and South Korea is Victoria's largest regional export market, with South Korea emerging as the fastest-growing major destination for Victorian food and fibre exports by value, in recent years.
South Asia (India)	According to the Food and Fibre Performance Report 2023-24, exports to South Asia rose in value by 33% from the previous year, growing year on year since 2020. ¹² Within the South Asia region, India represents the fast-growing market for exports, AgTech, food security partnerships, and regional education.
Southeast Asia	The Southeast Asia market accounted for 22% of Victoria's total food and fibre exports in 2023-24. ASEAN's GDP is projected to reach US\$5.4 trillion by 2028, driven by a growing middle class and rising demand for quality agribusiness goods. ¹³ Indonesia, Vietnam and Singapore offer opportunities for enhanced engagement.

¹² Food-Fibre-Export-Performance-Summary.

¹³ Southeast Asia-Robust economy offers Australian export prospects.



Emerging partners

Market / Region	Rationale
The United Kingdom and Europe (in particular Germany and Netherlands)	The UK and EU represent nearly \$23 billion in two-way trade with Victoria in 2023–24.¹⁴ The recent FTA with the UK and strategic alignment in clean manufacturing, AgTech, and circular economy position these markets well for high-value partnerships. Although finalisation of a pending EU-Australia free trade deal, EU nations such as Germany and Netherlands are front-runners in circular economy, AgTech, and renewable energy transitions. There is strong alignment with LM's innovation capabilities, especially around clean food, critical minerals and low-emissions technologies. Engagement could centre on joint innovation programs, sustainable packaging, or ethical sourcing of resources.
Middle East (e.g. UAE, Saudi Arabia)	Victoria has deepened its trade presence via an office in Dubai and strong bilateral connections.¹⁵ Emerging Middle Eastern interest in food security, water management, and clean energy aligns with Loddon Mallee's strengths in horticulture and solar energy, presenting opportunities for strategic engagement.
New Zealand (NZ) (e.g. Waikato)	While smaller in absolute value, NZ's proximity and shared regional challenges offer rich potential for peer collaboration in areas like regenerative agriculture, skills exchange, climate adaptation, and rural tourism development. Collaborative learning exchanges and joint industry forums would support capability-building across both regions.
Pacific Nations	There is growing demand for LM's produce from the Pacific Nations, with potential for regional development partnerships and climate resilience collaborations.

¹⁴ UK, Europe and Israel | Global Victoria.

¹⁵ Middle East, Türkiye and Africa | Global Victoria.

5.3. Priority Sectors for International Engagement

Mallee region

Comprising Mildura, Swan Hill, Gannawarra and Buloke, Mallee is export-oriented, with a strong track record in irrigated agriculture, premium food production and freight logistics. It is also home to significant renewable energy generation and First Nations-led tourism opportunities. The region is uniquely positioned to deepen ties with Asian and Middle Eastern markets seeking premium product, water-efficient technologies and sustainable energy solutions.

High Priority Sectors

Sector	Opportunities
Horticulture and Premium Food	Agriculture is the backbone of the Loddon Mallee economy, driving a significant share of Victoria's food exports with exports up 181% since 2010 and global growth opportunities in premium, sustainable food.
AgTech and Water Innovation	The region has built world-class expertise in water-efficient agriculture through decades of innovation in response to scarcity, positioning it for growing AgTech exports and technology partnerships in arid markets.
Clean Energy	Mallee is a leading renewable energy hub, accounting for 13% of Victoria's total renewable output and 67% of its solar generation. The region's high solar irradiance, strong grid, and hydrogen pilots make it attractive for solar, battery, and hydrogen investment.

Emerging Sectors

Sector	Opportunities
Tourism and first-Nations Experiences	Mallee offers distinctive eco and cultural tourism anchored by iconic natural and heritage sites. The region's unique experiences and infrastructure position it to capture high-value niche markets through targeted development, branding, and international marketing.
Transport and Logistics	Mildura's intermodal freight terminal and proximity to major national freight corridors position it as a strategic logistics hub for export. Expanding cold chain and supply chain capacity offers foreign investment opportunities to support premium horticultural exports and emerging growth corridors.



Key Export Goods

Export Goods	Description
Almonds	Massive export scale, growth potential in Indian market and opportunity for strategic diversification away from the China market. Current major markets: Citrus exports go to over 35 destinations, with China, Japan, South Korea, and Hong Kong comprising ~60% of volume. Potential expansion: USA, India, Europe, Middle East.
Citrus fruits	Strong upward trend in volumes, diversified markets, and LM's quality attributes make it attractive for premium branding. Current major markets: China, New Zealand, Japan, Thailand, Hong Kong. Potential expansion: Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore.
Table grapes	Strong export presence, growing value, and LM is a major production hub with quality, cold-chain infrastructure. Current major markets: China alone counts for 40% of exports in 2023, Indonesia, Thailand, Philippines, Malaysia. Potential expansion: Vietnam, Taiwan, Middle East.
Grains	Grains are high-volume, low-margin exports. Loddon Mallee contributes to wheat/barley production but there is opportunity to generate greater returns from international engagement via value-added processing / branding rather than bulk grain export itself. Current major markets: China, Middle East, Japan, Vietnam. Potential expansion: Bangladesh, South Korea, Egypt.
Wine (broadacre)	LM's broadacre wine production (Swan Hill, Mildura) is typically bulk/blend focused – good for volume exports but lower margin. Strategic opportunity is in premiumisation, branding, cellar-door tourism linkage, and targeted market entry rather than competing on bulk commodity price alone. Current major markets: UK, China, Canada, USA. Potential expansion: India, South Korea, Philippines.
Olives and olive oil	Smaller production and export footprint, though premium positioning with a focus on quality, traceability and niche market entry rather than mass volume exports is promising. LM producers (Boort, Kerang area) can target premium markets, but scale is limited without major expansion. Current major markets: USA (60%), New Zealand (11.3%), China (10.5%), Japan (5.88%).¹⁶ Potential expansion: UAE, India, South Korea.
Processing tomatoes and other food manufacturing	Victoria produces 70% of Australia's processing tomatoes, with additional opportunities in packaged fruit, nut, and vegetable products, specialty dairy, and plant-based proteins for health-conscious export markets. Current major markets: Singapore, NZ, New Caledonia. Potential expansion: Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, Middle East.

¹⁶ Australia | Imports and Exports | World | Olive Oil | Value (US\$) and Value Growth, YoY (%) | 2012 - 2023.

Loddon Campaspe region

Encompassing Greater Bendigo, Mount Alexander, Central Goldfields, Macedon Ranges, Loddon and Campaspe, the Southern sub-region of Loddon Mallee is a knowledge and innovation hub, with capabilities in advanced manufacturing, health, education, critical minerals, and cultural industries. It is well positioned to expand partnerships across education, clean technology and heritage tourism.

High Priority Sectors

Sector	Opportunities
Education and Training	The Loddon Campaspe sub-region is anchored by La Trobe University Bendigo, multiple TAFE campuses, and specialist training providers, offering strong capabilities in vocational and applied education.
Advanced Manufacturing	The region is home to growing clusters in specialised manufacturing, including AgTech, mining equipment, precision engineering, and defence-adjacent supply chains. Manufacturing accounts for approximately \$1.81 billion in regional exports, representing 28.9% of all exports from Greater Bendigo. ¹⁷ There is strong export potential in high-value niche products, with FDI opportunities in partnerships with international manufacturers seeking to regionalise supply chains.
Critical Minerals and Circular Economy	The region holds reserves of critical minerals such as lithium and antimony, supported by emerging circular economy capabilities in resource recovery and reuse. Rising global demand presents opportunities for sustainable mineral exports and FDI in processing, circular infrastructure, and traceability technologies.

Emerging Sectors

Sector	Opportunities
Cultural Tourism and Creative Industries	Bendigo, a UNESCO Creative City, anchors Loddon Campaspe's cultural offering with renowned festivals, arts institutions, and historic sites. Integrating food, wine, and cultural experiences into premium tourism packages can attract high-value international travellers with targeted investment in marketing and infrastructure.
Health and Aged Care	Greater Bendigo is a recognised centre of excellence in regional healthcare, aged care, and digital health innovation. There is strong potential to expand international training, advisory, and workforce exchange programs to support aged care and rural health, particularly with the Philippines, India, and New Zealand.

¹⁷ Greater Bendigo – Bendigo Regional Manufacturing Group.

Key Export Goods

Export Goods	Description
Beef and Sheep Meat	United States remains Victoria's largest export market by value for meat. \$1.57 billion. Demand for grass-fed, traceable, low-emission product is rising demand in premium markets such as South Korea, Europe and Singapore. The Loddon Campaspe sub-region produces grass-fed lamb and beef with provenance and low-emission credentials that match premium market demand. Current major markets: United States of America, China, Japan, South Korea. Potential expansion: Indonesia, United Arab Emirates, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia and Iran.
Dairy Products	The Loddon Campaspe sub-region (Castlemaine, Macedon Ranges) hosts boutique dairies and some larger producers with pasture-based credentials – well positioned for premium and artisan dairy exports, especially to markets seeking quality and sustainability. Current major markets: China, Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia. Potential expansion: Singapore, Thailand, South Korea, Vietnam, Philippines, United Arab Emirates (UAE).
Grains	Grain volumes remain large, but value is price-sensitive and volatile year-on-year. Demand from SE Asia and the Middle East is steady, pulses and specialty milling oats/flour have niche growth potential. Grain is a volume play rather than a high-margin export. Current major markets: China, Japan. Potential expansion: Philippines, India, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Middle East, Korea.
Wine (Premium)	Victoria's wine exports, part of the state's horticulture and beverages mix, benefit from premium market recovery. Cool-climate wines like Pinot Noir and Chardonnay are in demand in niche markets, supported by wine premiumisation and tourism linkages. Current major markets: UK, China, New Zealand, Hong Kong. Potential expansion: Singapore, South Korea, Japan, United States, Thailand, India.
Forest Products	Global demand for sustainable timber, engineered wood and green building materials is rising, Victorian producers can capitalise on low-carbon credentials. opportunities exist in engineered timber, sustainable timber products and niche furniture exports, leveraging green-building demand overseas.¹⁸ Current major markets: New Zealand, China, Indonesia, India. Potential expansion: Malaysia, Taiwan, Vietnam Middle East, USA (green building materials).
Food and Beverage Manufacturing	The state supports a large number of export-ready SMEs in food and beverage. Castlemaine and surrounds host craft food producers, breweries and specialty manufacturers with strong ESG stories which are well suited for curated export routes. Current major markets: New Zealand, China, Japan, US, Vietnam. Potential expansion: UAE, Japan, HK, niche EU markets.
Advanced Manufacturing	Victoria's manufacturing industry is large (provides ~27% of Australia's manufacturing output; ~260,000 employees across ~23,000 firms) and is a state policy priority.^{19,20} Opportunities exists to scale exports and attract FDI into niche, high-value manufacturing. Current major markets: Mainly domestic, small export footprint. Potential expansion: Japan, Germany, Singapore, USA (via partnerships).
Critical Minerals	Victoria's Critical Minerals Roadmap (2023–25) targets rare earths, lithium, antimony, and mineral sands, creating opportunities for value-added processing and investment amid rising global demand. Gold remains strategically important, with potential in processing, innovative mining, and heritage-linked tourism. Current major markets: Mostly exploration. Potential expansion: Japan, USA, EU (battery supply chains), South Korea.

¹⁸ bendigo.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-08/City-Greater-Bendigo-Industrial-Land-Development-Strategy-2024.

¹⁹ Victorian manufacturing statement launched | Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

²⁰ Manufacturing Statement | Made in Victoria | Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions.





6. Measures of Success

Success will be measured not only by direct economic outcomes, but also by the region's strengthened capability, visibility, and collaboration in international engagement. Indicators include:

- **Stronger regional coordination and participation:**
Increased collaboration between councils, industry, and community through shared forums, knowledge exchanges, and joint international initiatives.
- **Export growth and diversification:**
Measurable growth in exports across both established sectors (e.g. horticulture, advanced manufacturing) and emerging sectors (e.g. AgTech, critical minerals), with reduced reliance on single markets.
- **Increased investment attraction:**
New investment commitments in clean energy, advanced manufacturing, health, aged care, and value-add food processing, supported by regional branding and prospectuses.
- **Enhanced exporter capability:**
More small and medium enterprises proactively engaged in readiness workshops, using digital trade tools, and participating in international missions.
- **Innovation and knowledge sharing:**
Uptake of cross-sector innovation forums and partnerships that showcase regional leadership in sustainability, AgTech, and circular economy practices.
- **Global partnerships and visibility:**
Growth in sister-city and region-to-region partnerships, participation in trade missions and delegations, and international recognition through campaigns, diaspora engagement, and media coverage.
- **Education and skills pathways:**
Increased international student enrolments, talent exchange programs, and targeted migration to fill critical regional workforce needs.
- **Tourism and cultural diplomacy outcomes:**
Growth in international visitation, stronger storytelling of First Nations and multicultural communities, and recognition of the region's creative and cultural assets.



7. Critical Partners for Supporting International Engagement

7.1. Key Stakeholders and Partners

The successful implementation of the Loddon Mallee International Engagement Strategy relies on close collaboration across multiple tiers of government, industry, and regional stakeholders, leveraging the resources expertise and networks to maximise impact and secure benefits flow to local communities.

- **Regional Development Australia (RDA) Loddon Mallee:** Acts as the lead coordinator and strategic convener. Provides place-based intelligence, facilitates cross-sector collaboration, champions investment-ready initiatives, and leads implementation, reporting, and alignment with Commonwealth and Victorian Government priorities.
- **Local Councils:** Councils across the region are critical delivery partners. They contribute place-based knowledge, local economic development strategies, and visitor attraction plans. Councils support local engagement, infrastructure delivery, and co-branding through platforms like *Invest Loddon Mallee*.
- **Victorian Government Partners:** Agencies within DJSIIR such as Global Victoria, Invest Victoria, and DEECA including Agriculture Victoria ensure alignment with statewide trade, investment, skills, and sustainability priorities. These also provide policy guidance, strategic alignment, and access to funding. The region can leverage Global Victoria's network of 23 Victorian Government Trade and Investment offices across major international markets which is a critical asset for market intelligence, partner introductions, and trade facilitation.
- **Industry Bodies and Regional Partnerships:** Sector groups such as the Almond Board of Australia, Australian Table Grape Association, Citrus Australia, Hort Innovation, Dried Fruits Australia, Be.Bendigo, Bendigo Regional Manufacturing Group, Murray River Tourism, Food and Fibre Gippsland, and local chambers of commerce bring sector expertise, international networks, and co-investment opportunities. They play a critical role in export development, market access, and global partnerships.
- **Austrade:** The Australian Trade and Investment Commission (Austrade) provides access to Australia's global trade and investment network, offering market insights, introductions to potential partners, and support for export readiness and foreign investment attraction. Austrade's in-market teams can help identify and progress opportunities in priority countries. Austrade is linked to Global Victoria regional Food and Fibre Exports team who can offer both Victorian Government and Austrade support services to businesses.
- **Tertiary and Research Institutions:** La Trobe University, SuniTAFE, Bendigo Kangan Institute, and other education providers contribute to global education delivery, joint research, international student recruitment, and talent pipeline development.
- **First Nations Partners:** Traditional Owner groups across the region, including the Dja Dja Wurrung, Yorta Yorta, Barapa Barapa, Wemba Wemba, Latji Latji, and Ngintait peoples, are active participants in the regional economy and play a critical role in shaping international engagement. Their strategies and Country Plans guide initiatives in land management, bush foods, renewable energy, workforce development, and cultural exchange. Partnerships with Aboriginal-led organisations will ensure engagement respects Country, supports self-determination, and aligns with First Nations economic, environmental, and cultural priorities.
- **Exporters, Investors and Private Sector Leaders:** Regional businesses and investors provide market insights, drive innovation, co-fund projects, and serve as key beneficiaries and advocates of international engagement.





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