

# Sustainable Agricultural Rebate Guidelines

## 1- About the program

The Sustainable Agriculture Rebate (SAR) aims to encourage sustainable land management practices and the implementation of these principles on productive rural properties. The objectives of the SAR are:

- To encourage sustainable agricultural land management practices.
- To promote ecological management of rural land.
- To encourage the retention of larger rural land holdings.
- To protect and enhance the rural landscape character and the natural environment.

## 2- Who can receive the SAR?

To be eligible to receive the SAR, you must:

- a) Own a property (or aggregate of jointly managed properties\*) with a minimum size of 30 hectares where that land is classified as Farm Land in Section 2 (1) of the Valuations of Land Act 1960 (and is therefore receiving the Farm Rate)
- b) Prepare a Property Management Plan (or equivalent approved document) that specifies a range of activities that will promote sustainable and ecologically sound land and water management to the satisfaction of Council. This is described below in Section 4.

## 3- How is the level of rebate calculated?

The determination of this annual rebate is based on the following two components:

Component a) a single fixed amount of \$100 per eligible property (or per single aggregate of properties, where this aggregate complies with the definition of 'contiguous' – see \*Footnote).

Component b) \$15 per hectare of 'productive agricultural land' across each eligible property. The area of productive agricultural land is calculated for each property by subtracting the apparent area of bushland and domestic use from the total property area. Landowners will be given a single opportunity to challenge this area calculation, after which time this figure will be signed-off and set.

\*Footnote- Jointly managed smaller properties under one ownership can be aggregated to 30 hectares if they are 'contiguous' as defined as follows: *If several parcels of land in the same municipal district are occupied by the same person and separated from each other by a road or railway or other similar area across or around which movement is reasonably possible, the parcels must be regarded as together forming rateable land and valued accordingly* (from Section 13 DC (6) of the Valuations of Land Act 1960).

#### 4- What is required in terms of preparing a Property Management Plan (PMP)?

The preparation of a PMP and review of this plan on a three year basis is the core of the application process for the SAR. Although the preparation of the initial PMP may take several hours, the review will take less time and the previous need for an annual application form is no longer required. Some property owners may already have a PMP which only requires review and updating to receive the SAR.

Officers from Council's Environmental Planning Team are available to assist landowners with the preparation of their PMP's, for which a template is available. A PMP is a very useful tool for landowners and helps to drive efficient implementation of well-staged property improvement.

In order to be eligible to receive the SAR, landowners must provide a PMP (or equivalent document) that satisfies the following conditions:

- i. The PMP must be submitted for approval to the Environmental Planning Team of Council. The approval date for each ratified PMP will be noted and a copy of the document will be retained for Council records.
- ii. A separate PMP will be required for each property or aggregate of properties where the owner receives the \$100 fixed payment component of the SAR.
- iii. Landowners who received the SAR in 2012/13 will be required to submit their PMP according to the following schedule

<b>SAR amount per eligible property</b> (or contiguous group of properties)	<b>Cut-off date for submission of PMP</b>
SAR recipient is receiving more than \$850	1 June 2014
SAR recipient is receiving more than \$600	1 June 2015
SAR recipient is receiving less than \$600	1 June 2016

- iv. All SAR applicants who did not receive the SAR in 2012/13 will require an approved PMP prior to being eligible for the rebate. Changes to property rates on account of this rebate will be applied at the start of the financial year that follows submission of the required paperwork.
- v. All PMP's will need to be revised by the owner and re-submitted for re-approval within every three years. The Environmental Planning Team will give landholders ample notification and assistance to facilitate this process.
- vi. Each PMP will need to highlight a list of planned actions that demonstrate a level of commitment towards sustainable land management. Typical activities include:
  - Noxious and environmental weed control
  - Pest animal control works
  - Actions that protect and enhance areas of indigenous vegetation
  - Actions that aim to improve soil and pasture conditions
  - Works to protect the quality of waterways and water-bodies
  - Other activities that show a level of commitment to improving your knowledge about sustainable land management or demonstrating involvement with organisations such as local Landcare groups.

**For further information or to initiate an application for the SAR, please contact**

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