

Summary of Lim Chu Kang Master Plan Stakeholder Engagement Phase 1 Discussions

Participants were asked to identify the opportunities and challenges in securing Singapore's food future and how Lim Chu Kang could contribute towards Singapore's food security.

A) Balancing different needs and priorities

With only about 1% of land set aside for agriculture, participants recognised that there were competing needs for land use. To ensure Singapore's food security, participants acknowledged that food production would have to be prioritised over other aspects in order to meet our food security target.

Notwithstanding, we would need to balance the need to protect the nature, ecology and biodiversity of the area vis-à-vis our development plans for Lim Chu Kang, so that food production is not done at the expense of our environment. Participants agreed that while it was a good move to increase food production in the area, environmental sustainability was also a key consideration. For example, we would need to take into consideration the carbon emissions of farms so that the redeveloped Lim Chu Kang does not result in the pollution or degradation of the environment that may be detrimental to our ecology.

Participants also discussed opportunities to incorporate environment conservation, education and community outreach, to develop Lim Chu Kang into an attractive place to work, play and learn.

In the area of food production, participants highlighted the need to strike a balance between the production of a range of food types to provide consumers with diverse choices and to limit the production to selected food types to enable farmers to reap economies of scale. To this end, participants suggested that we prioritise a few food types that we ought to produce, taking into consideration the nutritional value of the produce and the resources needed to grow them. Participants also suggested that farmers focus on growing or creating niche products so that they need not compete with overseas producers on price.

B) Building a shared and sustainable ecosystem

Participants felt that there was an opportunity to develop an end-to-end ecosystem in Lim Chu Kang, with supporting infrastructure and peripheral industries in the vicinity. They suggested that shared facilities could be situated within Lim Chu Kang to reduce the cost of resources such as water and power.

Participants also raised the importance of sustainability in food production methods and suggested the establishment of a circular system in Lim Chu Kang that would reduce resource use and waste. For example, waste from one farm could be used as feed by others or converted into something useful.

Beyond shared facilities, participants suggested that we could earmark Lim Chu Kang as a space for the exchange of knowledge, skills and experience between different generations of farmers. While participants discussed the merits of different farming methods, they felt that farms should adopt the method or technology that utilised less resources while being more efficient and sustainable.

C) Enhancing the vibrancy and accessibility of Lim Chu Kang

Participants highlighted the importance of improving the accessibility and connectivity of Lim Chu Kang as part of its redevelopment plans. They suggested that there should be a variety of transport options available to make Lim Chu Kang more accessible to visitors and workers.

They also suggested enhancements to infrastructure for water and electricity to support high-tech and productive farming systems.

Overall, participants felt that there was opportunity to position Lim Chu Kang as an attractive location that offers accessibility, connectivity, food options and activities to cater to the different interests of Singaporeans.

D) Building capabilities and capacity

Participants noted that while we grow our produce locally, some of the raw materials for production such as seeds are still largely imported. As such, local food production remains vulnerable to external factors such as disruptions in freight and shipping. There is hence a need to strengthen the supply resilience of these raw materials.

To enhance food production, participants suggested for Lim Chu Kang to house R&D centres to prototype new food production methods, conduct research on high nutrient food types and how they could be produced locally, as well as to support the production of alternative protein products. Participants also suggested that we create a sandbox and provide space for businesses to test-bed their innovations and ideas.

Participants shared possibilities for technology and innovation to help farmers increase their yield as they scale up their production. For example, the agri-food industry could conduct research on seeds to facilitate high intensity growth or high-density cultivation of crops.

They also discussed possibilities for the local industry to develop a unique soil-based or organic farming method which could play an important role in preserving natural resources. Local industry players could also develop farming technology which best suits the heat and humidity in Singapore.

E) Public education about local produce and rebranding the farming industry

Another challenge highlighted by participants was ensuring that there was demand for local produce. Participants shared that consumers may not see the value of buying local. As a result, producers may have to look to overseas markets to sell their produce.

To this end, participants suggested that Lim Chu Kang could play a role in increasing awareness of local produce and educating the public on our food sources. They suggested the establishment of an education centre in Lim Chu Kang where educational tours could be conducted. There were also opportunities for more ground-up initiatives to involve the community and mobilise them to support our local produce. Participants also discussed ways in which Singapore could learn from other countries in developing Lim Chu Kang as well as the branding and positioning of Singapore's local produce.

On the farming industry, participants highlighted the need for a change in the perception of the industry in order to attract and encourage youths to take up a career in agriculture. For example, participants hoped that the redeveloped Lim Chu Kang would rebrand and reposition the farming industry as modern and high-tech, to build up a pipeline of young talents to grow and sustain the industry.

Participants discussed ways to create opportunities and excite the younger generation to join the industry. They also suggested ideas on how the transformation of our farming industry could brand and place Singapore's agri-food sector on the world map.