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To whom it may concern

City of Melbourne: Food Policy Discussion Paper

Comments from the Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance

1. INTRODUCTION / SUMMARY

The Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance (AFSA) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the *Food Policy Discussion Paper*, prepared by the City of Melbourne. We represent 110 organisations across Australia working for an equitable, sustainable and resilient food system for all Australians. Please see our Manifesto (Appendix 1) for a statement of our values and principles.

We commend the City of Melbourne on this important initiative. Not only will it benefit the residents, visitors and businesses within the City itself, as well as the farmers and growers who collectively meet the City's food requirements; this Food Policy will serve as a model and source of inspiration for other local governments throughout Victoria and across Australia who are beginning to understand that food is an essential part of core local government business.

These comments are brief and focus on matters of general principle rather than specific detail. We would refer readers to our Submission to the proposed National Food Plan (Appendix 2) for a more detailed statement of our position on the challenges faced by the Australian food system as a whole and what we believe are necessary and urgent changes. While the Melbourne food system is unique in many respects, it is of course directly linked to the national and global food systems, and so is impacted by their various vulnerabilities and dysfunctional character.

2. FOOD SOVEREIGNTY – PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE

Food Sovereignty is a global movement that embraces over 300 million people in more than 70 countries across five continents. The core of Food Sovereignty is the call for a democratic food system: one in which all the stakeholders across the system, from 'seed to spoon' and back again, are (to the greatest possible extent) directly engaged in determining its goals and shaping its direction and development.

We would like to see the principles of democratic participation and inclusivity form part of the City of Melbourne's Food Policy, with a firm commitment to expanding their practice in a variety of ways as the Policy is implemented and further developed in the coming years.

An integral part of the process of democratising the food system is the recognition of the reality that food is much more than a commodity. It is above all the source of life and well-being for people, societies, and the multi-dimensional eco-systems of which we all form part. Hence it is a key principle of Food Sovereignty that food is a universal human right to which all persons are entitled regardless of any differentiating characteristics.

Given that Australia is a signatory to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) in which the universal human right to adequate food is to be found, we would like to see the City of Melbourne Food Policy include an express statement acknowledging this right as a foundational principle on which the Policy is based.

Food Sovereignty was originally developed and articulated by the small and family farmer movement, La Via Campesina, in the mid-1990s, in direct response to the anti-democratic nature of the global food system which by then was largely controlled in many key sectors by a handful of giant transnational corporations. These farmers, who actually do the bulk of the daily work of 'feeding the world' in most of the world's countries, have been amongst those who have suffered the most as the global food system has been progressively restructured to suit the profit imperatives of the large corporations which are its principal beneficiaries. For example, more than half the malnourished persons in the world are, paradoxically, small family farmers and landless rural workers.

Australia is no exception to the global trend of a food system that disadvantages and exploits small and family farmers. Over the past few decades, Australian farmers have been subjected to a relentless 'cost-price squeeze' which has seen their numbers decrease by tens of thousands, with an estimated five farmers leaving the land each day. Levels of suicide and depression amongst farmers are reported to be double the national average. The majority of Australian farmers are well over fifty years old, and the general de-valuing of food in our culture (*see below*) means that there are few incentives for young people to want to become farmers and growers.

A thriving and diverse farming and food growing sector is the backbone of any sustainable, resilient and fair food system. We would like to see the valuing of Melbourne's farmers and food growers accorded the highest priority in the City of Melbourne's Food Policy; and the nurturing of this group of people – both its current members and future generations – should be an explicit goal of the Food Policy.

The implementation of Food Sovereignty at the national and local levels has taken many different forms, according to the needs and priorities as determined by local and national governments, and stakeholders across the Food System. In Ecuador, for example, Food Sovereignty is included in the 2008 Constitution, and has been legislated in the form of a Food Sovereignty Framework Law. In the United States, a number of municipal governments have adopted Food Sovereignty Declarations, asserting their right to democratically determine and control their own food systems. As in Australia, a United States Food Sovereignty Alliance was recently formed in order to advocate for the values and principles of Food Sovereignty, and to facilitate the implementation of these principles through practical actions and projects.

Even though the implementation of Food Sovereignty is necessarily diverse and context-dependent, at least three commonalities are emerging across countries and cultures. These are:

a) redistributive agrarian reform;
b) the adoption of agro-ecology as the foundation for a sustainable agriculture; and
c) the building of strong and diverse local and regional food economies.

In many countries and regions characterised by the concentration of the best agricultural land in the hands of a small minority who use it to grow commodity crops for export, redistributive agrarian reform requires that at least some of these holdings be broken up so that smaller farmers can grow a diversity of food crops for their local and national populations. In Australia, the high price of rural land acts as a barrier to entry for young people wishing to grow food. At the same time, there are many landowners who are under-utilising productive land. Hence the concept and practice of **land-sharing** has emerged in recent years as one way to facilitate, for example, the expansion of market gardens, and **we would recommend that the City of Melbourne explore ways to encourage land-sharing arrangements as part of its Food Policy.**

Agro-ecology is the application of the principles of ecology to the design and management of agricultural systems. Guided by the values of diversity and autonomy, agro-ecology is a more holistic and integrated approach to food production than certified organic systems, which can often replicate the difficulties associated with many conventional systems (i.e. large-scale monocultures that are input-dependent, with the difference that the inputs are

'organic' rather than chemicals). Permaculture and bio-dynamic agriculture share many of the same principles and values of agro-ecology. Earlier this year the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food reviewed the now extensive literature on agro-ecology, concluding that its widespread adoption would be one of the best ways to simultaneously address a wide range of urgent issues including climate change adaptation and mitigation, elimination of hunger, malnutrition and rural poverty, and protection of biodiversity and ecosystems. **We would like to see the City of Melbourne Food Policy support wherever possible (e.g. in local food procurement contracts) food production systems that are based on agro-ecological and associated principles.**

Like agro-ecology, building local and regional food systems addresses multiple challenges simultaneously and positively. Shortening supply chains and allowing farmers to once again become 'price-makers' rather than 'price-takers' can alleviate the pressures on farm viability. The intimate and direct connections established by localised food systems break down the isolation and atomisation that typically characterise modern farming experiences. In addition to greater financial incentives, this deeper level of connectivity provides important meaning and value to farming, which is part of making it attractive to younger people.

There are of course ecological and resiliency considerations which mean that localised food systems have significant advantages over hugely-extended and highly-centralised supply chains that currently characterise most Australian food systems. In an era when fossil fuels will, for a variety of reasons, be used much less profligately than they are at present, having a greater percentage of food being produced close to where it will be consumed makes very good sense. Urban food systems can be highly productive, as the experience of Havana in the early 1990s has demonstrated. Melbourne has a wealth of experience in community gardening and urban farming, and this will prove invaluable to the City of Melbourne in developing and implementing the Food Policy.

3. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

The examples of successful food system development in North America suggest that there are a number of elements of especial value and importance. These include:

a) Local food branding,
b) Food Hubs
c) Food co-operatives
d) Food literacy programmes
e) Food Policy Councils
f) Food Mapping / Food Systems Assessments

All of these elements form part of enabling a cultural shift around food to take place. What we are talking about is the transition from a culture of 'cheap food' to a culture of 'good and fair food'. The 'cheap food' culture which has developed in recent decades has depended on the reduction of food in the minds of many people to the sole issue of price. The consequences of this de-valuing of food and food producers are all around us, most obviously in the form of the obesity pandemic and the ecologically destructive impacts of the modern, industrialised, export-oriented food system. To take but one example amongst many, this system is, by some estimates, responsible for as much as half of all greenhouse gas emissions.

Moving away from the pervasive culture of cheap food requires the active cultivation of a deep appreciation and respect for food in all its forms, and for the people who do the work of producing, processing, distributing and selling it. It is perhaps no coincidence that, just as farmers have been devalued by the cheap food culture, so have workers across most sectors of the food system. We believe that, with an appropriate re-ordering of priorities, and the exploration of emerging institutions, structures and relationships, working in the food system does not have to be associated with low-paid, insecure and often dangerous work. On the contrary, it can be stimulating, meaningful and rewarding. However, the achievement of these goals will require a firm commitment to the long-term objective of democratising the food system.

The City of Melbourne Food Policy should cast its net widely in researching existing best practice in Australia and elsewhere in terms of policy formation and implementation around food systems. There is now a wealth of practical experience and a growing secondary literature, which should inform the policy development. Most important of all, however, is that the City of Melbourne remains committed to an open, participatory and democratic approach to the development and implementation of the Food Policy.

With members and affiliated organisations across Australia, including several based in Melbourne, the Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance is willing and able to contribute to this process. Once again, we congratulate the City of Melbourne on this initiative and wish it well in bringing to reality the vision of a fair, sustainable and resilient food system for present and future Melburnians.

Sincerely

Nick Rose
National Coordinator

APPENDIX 1

THE AUSTRALIAN FOOD SOVEREIGNTY ALLIANCE (AFSA)

MANIFESTO FOR A POSITIVE FOOD FUTURE

Good food, shared with family and friends, is one of the supreme joys of life. For many years, we've taken our food, and the people who grow, make and sell it, for granted. Yet all is not well in our food and farming systems. Far from nourishing us, our food often makes us ill. Instead of rewarding farmers for their knowledge and dedication, our food systems force them to rack up debt and leave the land. Rather than storing carbon in the ground, agriculture reliant on fossil fuels is a prime source of emissions.

We need to change our food and farming systems, and we need to do so urgently. We are farmers, community gardeners, writers, business-people, chefs, academics, and, most of all, citizens; and we are calling for a fair, safe, and resilient food future for all Australians based on the following principles:

We are what we eat
Every one of us wants to lead healthy and contented lives. Every one of us wants such lives for our children, and for future generations. Our food is the life-giving sustenance that makes this possible.

We all have the right to good, safe, clean food
We are working for high quality, fresh and nutritious food for everyone, at all times, irrespective of income status or background. This is the basis for human flourishing.

Food Shapes our World
We are building diverse ways of producing food that sustain and renew all the elements of healthy, resilient life on Earth. We are supporting living soils, clean waterways, thriving biodiversity, and a stable climate. We envision food systems whose vitality increasingly comes from the power of the sun, and so which don't wholly rely on expensive and non-renewable external inputs.

Food connects us all
We owe food a great debt: thanks to it, we are all part of the magnificent web of life, which is as much social as it is natural. We are working for thriving ecosystems *and* thriving societies. When we place a proper value on food by paying farmers a fair price, we create healthy and diverse local and regional economies. We see a future of celebratory local and regional food cultures around Australia and around the world – built on a fair deal for the farmers and food workers of the world.

Waste Not, and End Want
No natural system has waste, because waste is unsustainable. It is morally unacceptable to waste food in a world with a billion people under-nourished, and that hunger persists in an era when enough food is produced to feed 12 billion people. Our international trading system must work to eradicate hunger through social justice, not entrench it through subsidised wasteful over-production. Our food systems must ensure that unavoidable waste is recycled appropriately, preferably as fertility for the soil.

Paying due respect
When we eat meat, we must do so with conscious regard for the innate dignity of all living creatures. We urge a transition away from factory farming to the many humane alternatives for raising livestock.

Resilience in diversity

We need diverse food systems able to withstand future shocks. From seed to supermarket, food and its profits are increasingly owned by a handful of multinational corporations, making our current food system fragile. As an alternative we see a vigorous food future based in diversified farming, thriving social enterprises, and expanding community food systems: from backyard gardeners to Community-Shared Agriculture. What we are talking about is a transition towards *distributed food systems*, characterised by: a) the *decentralisation* of infrastructure, ownership and responsibility, b) the *cyclical movement* of inputs, resources, produce and waste, and c) the *flexible interdependence* of all actors in diverse and resilient systems.

Let's reclaim our Food Sovereignty!

Food is too vital to be governed only by international trade rules and the hidden hand of the market. We say that our food systems, from the global to the national to the local, should be open and democratic spaces of debate, discussion and the widest participation possible. We are building mutually supportive local and global relationships around food, and advocating for trade in food that is fair, transparent and that does no harm to the food sovereignty ambitions of any other nation or people. A vital part of this is ensuring indigenous food sovereignty and the continuity of indigenous food traditions.

For AFSA, the sovereignty we speak of is about our freedom to choose the food we want, produced in ways we support, by people who earn a good living from its production. We are forging a path towards conscious food citizenship based on a democratic and resilient national food system.

If you are passionate about a delicious food future with integrity for Australia and the world, join us!

For more information, visit http://foodsovereigntyalliance.org

The Six Pillars of Food Sovereignty

1. *Focuses on Food for People:*

• insists on the right to nourishing food for everyone
• insists that food is more than a commodity

2. *Values Food Providers:*

• supports the right to produce food
• supports sustainable livelihoods

3. *Localises Food Systems:*

• places providers and consumers at the centre of food-related decision-making
• rejects food dumping and inappropriate food aid
• resists food system dependency on remote and unaccountable corporations

4. *Localises Control:*

• places control in the hands of local food providers
• recognises the need to inhabit and to share territories
• rejects the privatization of 'natural resources' and the protects the global commons – water, air, land, seeds, climate

5. *Builds Knowledge and Skills:*

• builds on traditional knowledge
• uses research to support and pass this knowledge to future generations
• rejects technologies that undermine or contaminate local food systems

6. *Works with Nature:*

• uses nature's contributions in the design & management of sustainable food systems
• builds and maintains resilience
• rejects energy intensive, monocultural, industrialised, and destructive production methods

A lightly edited version of the 'Pillars' developed at Nyéléni 2007, reproduced from Food Secure Canada: **http://foodsecurecanada.org/six-pillars-food-sovereignty**

New Food Pathways for Australia: The Guiding Principles

The Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance has no prescriptive formulas for the development of food pathways, which should be the outcome of inclusive and participatory debates and forums. We offer some guiding principles, based on the inspirational work already underway by farmers and communities around the country and around the world:

* ***Relocalisation:*** Food should be eaten as close to its source as possible. Long supply chains are wasteful of energy, hinder communication between farmers and city folk, and obscure the provenance of food. In Australia, while major grain and livestock operations are typically located at some distance from the large urban centres, there is great potential for relocalisation of fruit and vegetable supply through optimising the use of available urban and peri-urban land. For example, 50% of all NSW vegetable farms are in the Sydney basin, but many are under threat through the expansion of residential development. These urban and peri-urban centres of production should be protected as cornerstones of resilient urban foodsheds for future generations.

* ***Fair trade and social justice:*** Food citizens need food choices that are affordable, support their wellbeing, and give pleasure, without degrading the environment that is the foundation of all health and wellbeing. In exchange for supplying food that meets these criteria, farmers need a return that allows them to live in comfort and dignity, to maintain the productive capacity of their farm and to undertake the necessary activities to support its ecological integrity. In addition, food and food producing must be socially re-valued, so that agricultural labour is no longer dangerous and low-paid, and that new and young farmers can enter agriculture with a genuinely sustainable livelihood. Any system that fails to deliver these outcomes is fundamentally unsustainable.

* ***Resilience:*** Highly centralised and monolithic structures, like our current food system, are vulnerable to shocks. Diverse food pathways mean that no single shock can catastrophically disrupt the whole food supply.

* ***Keep close to nature:*** Given the intimate linkages between human health and ecosystems health, our wellbeing is served by eating food that is produced to be naturally nutritious (synonymous with "tasty") rather than bred solely for properties like high yield, or alternatively highly processed purely in order to prolong shelf-life.

High input agriculture, increasingly dependent on short-term technological fixes, has become the norm. The new food pathways seek to have synthetic inputs as tools of last resort, rather than the main management tool.

Farm production methods and technologies which are based on regenerative methods of developing soil fertility, and use natural ecological checks and balances

against pests and diseases, are less likely to have detrimental consequences on the environment -- fertiliser leaching into waterways, chemical toxins in groundwater and food -- than methods which rely on high levels of synthetic inputs.

In livestock production, free-range methods recycle nutrients, usually from pastures grown on-site. By contrast, intensive livestock methods create large concentrations of manure, requiring extra energy for disposal, and rely wholly on imported feeds. As seen in recent years, big factory farms are also potential breeding grounds for dangerous pathogens such as swine flu.

* ***Energy efficiency:*** The current food system is characterised by long supply chains, synthetic inputs, and mechanisation that reduces labour demands while increasing reliance on fossil fuel energy. Cumulatively, these factors make food production one of the largest single contributors to climate change, which in turn is the largest single threat to future food production.

The new food pathways seek to have a much smaller energy footprint, lessening reliance on dwindling energy resources. Reduced carbon emissions are facilitated by Food Sovereignty's emphasis on context-specific agricultural methods, premised above all on the development and maintenance of healthy and living soils. The active sequestering of atmospheric carbon in soils by perennial plants reduces farmers' dependence on expensive imported fertility; chemical fertiliser imports are estimated to cost Australia's farmers in the vicinity of $3 billion per annum. Soil carbon sequestration and reduced emissions from food systems have the potential to lower the food sector's emissions profile, possibly to the extent of being neutral or negative.

* ***Less waste:*** The current food system is highly wasteful. For example, over 40 per cent of household residual rubbish sent to landfill in Melbourne is food organics (DSE 2009, Metropolitan Waste and Recovery Strategic Plan, Department of Sustainability and Environment, Melbourne). At the same time, enormous quantities of finite mineral resources like phosphorus, all of which is imported, are excreted and flushed out to sea.

Minimising waste in the first place, and where possible the redistribution of any surplus produce, then recycling as much discarded organic nutrient as possible back to the land, must be a priority for any food system that aims for sustained soil fertility.

* ***An ethic of care:*** of land, of watersheds, of soil, of air, of animals – and of each other.

Everyone must play their part in the transition to resilient, nourishing and sustainable food systems

Developing new food pathways will require participation of everyone involved:

- Governments and policy-makers will have to establish new policy frameworks that encourage and support innovation outside the existing food system. Minimum local procurement provisions in publicly-funded contracts, as has been legislated for example in Illinois, is one example of creative policy making that can build resilient and socially just food systems. The establishment in 2009 of a Food Security Council in Tasmania, and the leadership that the Council is providing in supporting diverse food supply chains, is an example that should be followed in other states.
- Farmers will need to start forming new market relationships and be prepared to respond to different market signals. The expansion of farmers' markets in the past decade, and the recent emergence of community-shared agriculture, are examples of the sorts of new exchanges that should be nurtured and strengthened.
- Food retailers will need to begin to persuade shoppers of the merits of new ways of valuing food and not simply using cost as a measure. Food co-ops and wholefood stores around the country have for many years pioneered ethical approaches to food value chains that can serve as models for others.
- All of us will need to begin looking beyond the narrow self-interest of price and convenience, and start to make food choices based on the understanding that how we eat shapes our world, and most importantly the world of our children and grandchildren. In other words, we will need to become consciously-acting *food citizens*.

What we are talking about is the transition towards *distributed food systems*, characterised by: a) the *decentralisation* of infrastructure, ownership and responsibility, b) the *cyclical movement* of inputs, produce and waste, and c) the *flexible interdependence* of all actors (VEIL, Distributed Systems: A design model for sustainable and resilient infrastructure, March 2010, Che Biggs, Chris Ryan and John Wiseman).

The Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance (AFSA)

Who are we?

The Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance is a Civil Society Organisation), not for profit and speaks to the core values and principles of 88 organisations that have signed our August 2010 letter to the then-federal Minister for Agriculture, Tony Burke, calling for the formation of a democratic and inclusive national food policy. AFSA speaks to the aspirations of the many hundreds of thousands of people directly involved in building and supporting Resilient Food Systems in Australia.

The AFSA emerged as a new player in the Australian national political landscape with the express aim of giving a strong and coherent voice to the very diverse range of groups and individuals around the country working now to create resilient and socially just distributed food systems.

What is our vision?

Moving beyond the rhetoric of party politics, the AFSA is focused on shaping policy according to the experience and innovations of the hundreds of thousands of Australians who are already creating practical, resilient and exciting food pathways in their towns and communities. In the AFSA vision, small is beautiful yet big has its place too, providing all systems maintain a balance that equitably includes people, planet and profit.

The AFSA is rapidly becoming a national voice for a resilient, reliable and socially just food system, comprised of a diversity of new food pathways. The AFSA speaks to the core values of participants in **resilient food systems**: openness, transparency, local control, fairness, social justice and equity, honesty, and integrity. When combined, these values can produce democratic, healthy and successful economic, social and environmental decisions, policies and outcomes.

We should be aiming to create food and agricultural systems that can withstand systemic shocks. These systems should be of diverse scale and scope, be autonomous yet interconnected, and create a flexible, stable and fail-safe whole.

Speaking to the values of the players in the emerging resilient, durable food systems – from farmers' markets, community gardens, community-shared agriculture, agro-ecological farming, Transition Initiatives, permaculture groups and Slow Food convivia - the AFSA requests seats at the table in any negotiations which involve food policy at local, State and Federal levels. The number of practitioners and supporters of these food systems is estimated to be growing at 20% per annum. These dedicated and innovative individuals represent a big part of the future of food and agriculture in Australia, deserving the full support and respect of government and policy-makers.

The AFSA also embraces the recent development of Indigenous Food Sovereignty (IFS) by indigenous peoples from the Americas and the Pacific, as a policy framework responding to the specific food needs of indigenous people. We are collaborating with the Indigenous peoples of Australia in jointly creating the inclusive, democratic, resilient and life-enriching future that all of us need and are capable of creating.

About this Manifesto

This Manifesto sets forth a vision and a programme for transformative political change of food and farming in Australia. We make the case that the current system is failing us badly in many respects, and articulate the alternatives, based on the existing daily practices of thousands of Australians.

The Manifesto for the AFSA was prepared by Michael Croft and Nick Rose, during October & November 2010. Thanks to the critical supportive reading provided by Claire Nettle, Stuart Hill, Penny Scott, Jennifer Alden, Kathy McConnell, Bob Phelps, Fran Murrell, Madeleine Love and Russ Grayson.

FOOD SOVEREIGNTY: WHAT IS IT?

"Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food that is produced through ecologically sustainable methods, and to participate in decisions about our food and agriculture systems. It puts those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies, rather than letting these be determined by the demands of markets and corporations. It defends the interests and inclusion of future generations. It offers a strategy to resist and dismantle the current corporate trade and food regime, and directions for food, farming, pastoral and fisheries systems so that they can be determined by local producers. Food sovereignty prioritises local and national economies and markets and empowers peasant and family farmer-driven agriculture, artisanal fishing, pastoralist-led grazing, and food production, distribution and consumption based on environmental, social and economic sustainability, and the wellbeing of all life. Food sovereignty promotes transparent trade that guarantees just income to all peoples, and the rights of consumers to control their food and nutrition. It ensures that the rights to use and manage our lands, territories, waters, seeds, livestock and biodiversity are in the hands of those of us who produce food and care for landscapes. Food sovereignty implies new social relations free of oppression and inequality between men and women, peoples, racial groups, social classes and generations."

A lightly edited version of the 27 February 2007 Declaration of Nyéléni, following the **Forum for Food Sovereignty** in Sélingué, Mali, which was attended by over 500 delegates from more than 80 countries: www.nyeleni.org

"Food Sovereignty is...the right of peoples and sovereign states to democratically determine their own agricultural and food policies."

From the April 2008 report of the International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development, compiled by 400 of the world's leading agricultural scientists and development experts, and sponsored by the United Nations and the World Bank:
www.agassessment.org
A similar definition of Food Sovereignty now appears in the Constitution of the Republic of Venezuela, and also in the Constitutions of Nepal, Mali, Senegal, Bolivia and Ecuador.

"Indigenous Food Sovereignty [is based on] sacred or divine sovereignty – food is a gift from the Creator; in this respect the right to food is sacred and cannot be constrained or recalled by colonial laws, policies and institutions. Indigenous food sovereignty is fundamentally achieved by upholding our sacred responsibility to nurture healthy, interdependent relationships with the land, plants and animals that provide us with our food"

From the Canadian-based Indigenous Food Systems Network:
www.indigenousfoodsystems.org

The case for change – the current Australian food and farming system is failing

Our current food system evolved for complex reasons. For over 50 years, it has been remarkably successful at producing cheap, plentiful food, producing enough food to support a population three times the size of Australia's.

Yet the current system is now failing in many ways due to the manner in which it has developed over time. Amongst such failures, which affect all economic sectors, we need to consider the following:

- depleted soil carbon levels and declining soil fertility
- loss of biodiversity in terrestrial, marine and aquatic ecosystems
- rising salinity
- obesity and chronic illnesses
- the total commodification of food, resulting in farmers being 'price takers', unable to set the terms of exchange in contracts with buyers which this leads to depressed prices and depressed farmers
- monocultures that offer little resilience against price fluctuations, pests and diseases
- environmental damage
- unsustainable water extraction from aquifers and rivers
- two corporations controlling 4 out of every 5 food purchases
- every major town and city in Australia having no more than 2 days of staples and 5 days of all foods in reserve
- urban sprawl facilitated by a lack of prime agricultural land protection
- short-term mining gains at long-term food producing land losses.

Cumulatively and collectively, these failings point to a fundamental ***lack of resilience*** in the current food and farming systems. They can all be directly linked to the unbalanced pursuit of 'single bottom line' profit without consequence facilitated by an economic rationalist approach to government policy. These outcomes impact directly, and negatively, on public, ecological and social health:

Public health

"Recent trends predict that the life expectancy for Australian children alive today will fall two years by the time they are 20 years old...It is unacceptable that we as a nation are leaving this legacy to our children and grandchildren."
National Health Preventative Taskforce Report on Obesity, September 2009

Everyone needs to eat. With air and water, food is the most basic of human necessities. Food is what nourishes us, repairs our cells, gives us energy, protects us from illness and heals us when we are ill. The buying and selling of food, and the cooking, eating and sharing of it, connects us with each other. Food is central to building healthy and resilient communities.

At least, that's what food, and relations around food, should be. In modern Australia, and world-wide, food products have become the causes of disease, suffering and premature death. Unhealthy eating is irrefutably linked to the development of obesity and chronic disease conditions including cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, osteporosis, and dental disease.

The most recent official figures (from 2003) show that high body mass was the third major cause of disease in Australia, ranked just behind tobacco and high blood pressure. According to some estimates, nearly 70% of Australians – including 25% of all children - are overweight; and nearly a third of us are obese. Indigenous Australians are three times as likely as non-Indigenous Australians to be morbidly obese, i.e. at risk of serious disease. The direct and indirect costs to taxpayers, and the wider economy, run into the tens of billions of dollars annually. Some experts, such as Professor John Coveney of the Flinders University School of Medicine, warn that if present trends continue in a state like South Australia, the health budget will exceed the whole of the state budget by 2032.

Then there is food insecurity: not being certain of having access at all times to adequate, safe, nutritious and culturally appropriate food. One would think that in a country as wealthy as Australia, no-one – and certainly no child – would be allowed to go to bed hungry. But according to the non-profit hunger relief organisation FoodBank,

> *"Each year, two million Australians will rely on food relief, and around half of them will be children. These children will often go to school without breakfast, or to bed without dinner."*

Our food system should keep us healthy and provide us all with enough good, high-quality, nutritious food. Many Australians are concerned about the levels of synthetic chemicals present in our foods, the safety and ethics of meat obtained from animals raised in factory farming conditions, and the unknown impacts on human and environmental health of the increasing genetic modification of food products and other emerging new food-related technologies such as nanotechnology.

Ecosystem and environmental health

The way we produce food should be in balance with surrounding ecosystems: ensuring the integrity of water catchments, preserving biodiversity and the fertility of soils, and avoid depleting non-renewable resources and altering our climate.

Placing the profit motive above all other considerations has allowed economics to shape and determine food production priorities. Environmental costs have been 'externalised', not included in the check-out price of our food. The accumulated debts that the system owes nature are beginning to fall due. In effect, as author Raj Patel says, it's not cheap food, it's 'cheat food'. But nature's no fool, and will not be deceived indefinitely.

Our major national river system is in crisis, and billions of tonnes of topsoil have been eroded since European occupation. The high-input monocultural agriculture of the current food distribution system is estimated to be Australia's single largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, accounting for up to 39% of emissions. This system is heavily dependent on fossil fuel inputs, from the most elementary of farm machinery to delivery, storage and retailing mechanisms at the expense of the potential to capture carbon.

The system's dependence on fossil fuels helps explain why wastefulness is endemic in the current food system. The impacts of such waste and profligate resource usage are severe: about half of our personal ecological footprint in Australia is food-related. This is a major reason why Australia is amongst the top ten most unsustainable nations in the world.

Social health

Having transformed the global economics of food, the current food system is failing economically. Its basis was the Green Revolution equation of productivity gains based on cheap inputs. The gains have stopped, the inputs are no longer cheap, and farmers' terms of trade have

shifted into the negative.

There are many reasons for this; some global, some national. Globally, the 'free trade' model promoted bilaterally and under the World Trade Organisation has largely benefitted multinational conglomerates at the expense of farmers and rural communities worldwide. For example, since the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) came into force in January 1994, millions of small Mexican corn farmers have been forced to leave their land, unable to compete with the cheap, heavily subsidised imports from the United States (David Bacon, *Displaced People: NAFTA's Most Important Product*, NACLA, https://nacla.org/node/4980).

In Australia, the growing power of the supermarket duopoly since the early 1970s, combined with the globalization of trade, has meant that prices for basic commodities have fallen by around 80 per cent in real terms during the past few decades, according to the National Land and Water Resource Audit (http://www.anra.gov.au/topics/economics/pubs/national/anrm-report/scene.html). It's all about economies of scale, and the message is 'get big – get enormous - or get out'. In essence, our farming systems are built on the shaky basis of ever-increasing yields for steadily diminishing returns: Australian farmers now produce four times the volume of agricultural commodities to earn around half what their forebears did in 1950 (Ted Henzell, *Australian Agriculture: Its History and Challenges*, CSIRO Publishing, Collingwood). The devaluing of food production is further reflected in the conditions of the 370,000 agricultural workers, who are the lowest paid and most insecure workforce in the country, according to the Productivity Commission's 2005 report *Trends in Australian Agriculture* (http://www.pc.gov.au/research/commissionresearch/agriculture).

Combined with natural catastrophes such as prolonged natural and human-made drought, the social impact of these processes on farmers and rural communities has been, and continues to be, devastating. Rates of suicide and depression amongst farmers are around double the national average. According to some estimates, as many as 80,000 Australian farmers have left the land since 1965; an average of 5-6 farmers a day (ABS, *Agricultural Commodities*, 2007/8; Pestana B 1993, *Australian agriculture: the complete reference on rural industry*, National Farmers Federation, Canberra). .

Due to the unjust global trade system, farmers and landless rural workers – the majority of them women - make up more than half of the 925 million currently malnourished people in the world (Food and Agriculture Organisation, *State of Food Insecurity in the World*, 2010, http://www.fao.org/publications/sofi/en/). This human-induced impoverishment in turn leads to unnecessarily high levels of infant mortality and waves of migration. It is a form of structural violence in which 'the mass movement of food is leading to the [forced] mass movement of people', as the global small farmers' movement, La Via Campesina ('The Farmers' Way), explains it.

Global and national food systems with rules skewed in favour of large corporations have an impact on social health and are anti-democratic in nature and design. The rules are often made behind closed doors, with minimal public discussion, and at times – as is the case with the introduction of genetically-modified food products without mandatory labelling – contrary to the clearly expressed wishes of a majority of the population. The implications of this for the future of our children and our society are that everyone has a stake in the food system of the future, and everyone should have a say in shaping it. Yet when governments and big corporations dogmatically insist, in spite of mounting evidence to the contrary, that 'free markets' will always deliver the 'cheapest' and the 'best' outcomes for everyone, ordinary citizens

find they are excluded from the debate.

The justification – the big picture of global hunger

The expansion of 'big' globalised agribusiness, food processors and supermarket chains rests on the claim that it's only through big commodity export volumes, large distribution systems and the fulsome embrace of all new technologies that we can achieve global food security, i.e. 'feed the world'. The Malthusian equation that underpins the belief that the world will have to double food production by 2050 in order to feed an anticipated population of 9 billion people has implicit in it the idea that there's a shortage of food at the moment.

But that's simply not true. In fact, when we take into account the levels of waste, inefficiencies and inequities of the current system, the world today produces enough food to feed 12 billion people, nearly double the current global population.

In Australia an estimated 47% of municipal waste sent to landfill is organic (food and green waste), not only creating greenhouse gases but also a waste of nutrients (EcoRecycle Victoria (2005), Information Sheet 2 - Waste Facts, last modified March 2005, http://www.sustainability.vic.gov.au/www/html/2039-waste-and-recycling-information-sheets.asp). In the competition between 'food for the poor' and 'fuel for the cars of the rich', as much as a third of the huge US corn crop is diverted to ethanol, which both critics and independent expert reviewers describe as a 'non-solution' to climate change (UK Renewable Fuels Agency, Gallagher Review of the Indirect Effects of Biofuels, 2008, http://www.renewablefuelsagency.gov.uk/reportsandpublications/reviewoftheindirecteffectsofbiofuels). Tragically, food rots in the open and in warehouses because the poor lack money to pay for it.

At its root, the persistence of the scandal of mass hunger in an era of food abundance is a matter of equity and social justice, not production. In fact, it's actually the *over-production* – principally of corn and soy, which form the basis of the great mass of energy dense and nutrient poor foods - that is creating a world that is simultaneously 'stuffed and starved', in Raj Patel's words (Patel, 2007, *Stuffed and Starved: Markets, Power, and the Hidden Battle for the World's Food System*, Black Inc, Melbourne).

A growing global alternative – Food Sovereignty

Millions of people are outraged by the persistence of hunger and the forms of malnutrition that have produced the obesity epidemic, and are determined to create more resilient, distributed food systems that can withstand the systemic challenges of climate change and peak oil. Building alternative food systems provides new food pathways that recognise the fundamental role food plays in determining the quality of our lives and environment.

Ecologically, these pathways are grounded in the principles of successful natural ecosystems:

- diversity
- resilience
- adaptability
- re-cycling and waste minimisation.

Ecosystems evolve in response to local conditions. Local ecosystems are unique, form an interconnected, resilient whole, comprising efficient users of energy and recyclers of waste.

Politically, these pathways broadly subscribe to the principles of *food sovereignty*, a concept developed by La Via Campesina. This global movement of over 300 million people in 70 countries is dedicated to promoting and defending small and family farming. It recognises that the complex of issues surrounding food are an interlinked and inseparable whole.

Food Sovereignty is strongly grounded in the principles of equity and social justice, recognising that access to adequate, safe, nutritious and culturally appropriate food is a basic human right, as acknowledged by 160 countries.

As a policy framework, Food Sovereignty argues that producers within bioregions or 'foodsheds', regions and nations should be free to produce food using techniques that serve the long-term good of the land and society, rather than short-term corporate profit. As a matter of equity and of resilience, it argues that consumers – *food citizens* - should be able to preferentially eat food grown close at hand, rather than be pressured to consume according to the economic forces of globalisation.

Food sovereignty resists corporatisation of the food supply, through which ownership of the means of producing and distributing food is being monopolised by a handful of companies. It is a principle of Food Sovereignty that the basic building blocks of a nation's foodshed – its seeds and germplasm – are a matter of fundamental national interest and therefore should – with few exceptions - be kept in public ownership. Thus, on the basis of the precautionary and democratic principles, the AFSA supports the calls made by farmer and consumer groups around the world for:

- an immediate moratorium on GM crops and imports
- the immediate mandatory labelling of products fully or partly derived from GM crops or processes
- a full, transparent and participatory national debate on all issues concerning GM crops and food products; such national debates should also embrace emerging new food-related technologies such as nanotechnology

In valuing local knowledge and traditions, food sovereignty argues that publicly-funded research should be directed to develop and sustain local knowledge, facilitating its transfer to future generations.

Food Sovereignty insists that food systems and food policy must be transparently and democratically debated and determined by the whole of society, in order to serve the interests of the whole of society: 'by the people, for the people'. Food Policy cannot simply be demanded by the largest corporations, nor developed to suit their interests.

AUSTRALIAN PERSPECTIVES – RESPONSES TO THE ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE OF THE AUSTRALIAN FOOD SOVEREIGNTY ALLIANCE, Sep-Oct 2010

What do you think the purpose and goals of the AFSA should be?

"The main objective should be to eventually make a high level of food sovereignty knowledge the mainstream. Every Australian should take care to only purchase quality food, that has minimal food miles, is fresh and organic, and does not put profits in the hands of large corporations, but in the hands of primary producers (not including factory farms) where it belongs."

What are the most pressing food / farming-related concerns for you / your organisation?

"Sowing seeds, growing and harvesting food, cooking and sharing food is one way that ALL human[s] can connect with each other and our mother earth. This [is] a right for everyone...I also think our current food system is making us all time poor - the producer and the consumers. Food is a basic need. By having to work so many hours just to make ends meet, you have less time to live life. If food was more readily available through local growing networks - networks that people were in some way a part of, food would not be as expensive, it would be healthier and more readily available and we would have more time to live life."

What are your / your organisation's aspirations for food / farming in your area?

"[I want to see] nutritionally adequate foods available and accessible to all. Reduce the amount of junk foods available at cheap prices. Reform labeling laws, don't give in to the big food producing companies: we need a clear labelling system such as the traffic light system recently rejected in the EU. Ban junk food advertising to children. Ban sponsorship of children's sports clubs by junk food producers. Support local and national growers of fruits and veg. Don't carve up all of our great farm land for urban development."

"I would like to see a local food suply system with expanded diversity of produce that provides people with food choice throught the year, and that people become articulate in using...There is much work to do to inform people about the seasonality of fresh produce. As a farmer it is part of my work to discuss seasonality and the range of options available to my consumers. I am working on broadening the local range of seasonal produe, so that customers can have choices in the food they eat without needing to rely on produce transported huge distances.

What should we say to politicians about food & farming in Australia?

"What is food security - at an individual level and at the societal level? Government[s] should be addressing food security at a societal level, with the collective good of the community (both physically and ecologically) as their goal, and not be allowing corporations to address food security at the individual (consumer) level to satisfy economic goals.

What is food sovereignty and why is it important? The 'right to farm' is actually the right of a community to feed itself, it is a global social justice issue based on the premise that food is a need, not a want."

"This is not an issue of 'left' or 'right' wing politics. The solutions we seek and are developing make

sense for greens, independents, regional communities etc. Truly free markets full of diverse participants (not controlled by supermarkets and large agribusiness) strengthen local livelihoods and innovation. Sustainable food production, reducing reliance on non-renewable inputs and improving ecological health, can increase farmer profitability and improvement the quality of our soils, river systems and biodiversity. This is not about 'greenies' vs ' farmers' - the solutions we seek work for urban consumers (and producers) and for diverse and vibrant regional communities and economies. The common ground is calling!"

APPENDIX 2

National Food Plan Unit
C/o Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
GPO Box 858
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

2nd September, 2011

By Email: nfpsubs@daff.gov.au

Dear Senator the Hon. Joe Ludwig

National Food Plan Issues Paper

Submission of the Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance

1. INTRODUCTION / SUMMARY

The Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance (AFSA) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the *Issues Paper to inform development of a national food plan*, prepared by DAFF. We represent 110 organisations across Australia who are working for an equitable, sustainable and resilient food system for all Australians.

The Australian Government is to be commended on its initiative in beginning the process of developing, for the first time, a National Food Plan for the country as a whole. Given the scope, scale, complexity and urgency of the issues that confront the food system as a whole, this initiative is both timely and necessary.

That said, we believe that a much more broadly based, wide-ranging, participatory and inclusive approach to the Plan's development needs to be undertaken. As regards the substantive content of the proposed Plan, there is a need for much bolder questioning of conventional economic orthodoxies.

Our submission focuses on the underlying assumptions that are indicative of DAFF's approach to the core issues, rather than specific answers to the 48 questions listed in Appendix 2 of the paper. In the course of our submission we will however touch on some of the over-arching questions.

Basically, ***the main point we want to make*** is that the Issues Paper in its essential aspects and its core assumptions ***continues to perpetuate the comfortable presumption that the future will look much like the past***, and therefore ***downplays the urgent need for change towards much more resilient, sustainable and fair food and farming systems***. We need a National Food Plan that presents to the Australian public a convincing vision of food and farming systems that will successfully meet the pressing challenges of the present and the future. At the heart of this vision must lie ***the recognition that food is a basic human right that everyone is entitled to***; it is not simply another commodity produced for export and profit.

In practice this means:

- a fair price for farmers,
- a shift towards agro-ecology as the 'normal' method of farm production,
- a transition away from factory farming,
- improved access to healthy and nutritious foods for all,
- controls and proper regulation of energy-dense, nutrient-poor foods (e.g. prohibitions on advertising of junk foods to children), and
- a committed whole-of-society effort to eliminate the horrendous levels of waste that we currently tolerate at all points in the food and farming system.

What we are talking about here is a National Food Plan that ***places as its highest objective the well-being of***: farmers, communities, individuals, ecosystems, livestock, and the country as a whole.

All of the above requires strong political leadership. Food and farming are so vital and cross-cutting that, in our view, the National Food Plan must be led and coordinated from the Prime Ministers' Office, not DAFF.

We also have significant concerns about the process taken to date, including narrow stakeholder involvement, the lack of public engagement, general lack of transparency and the fact there is no clear mechanism for coordinating a "whole of government approach". This reduces the chances of the National Food Plan, as currently conceived, of being relevant or effective in meeting the current and future challenges regarding food and farming. We have detailed our concerns and made suggestions about the process going forward in the addendum to this submission.

We have kept the submission brief, however we look forward to being able to engage in a genuine, open and transparent spirit of dialogue on all issues concerned. Over the coming months we will expand on the points made below and take every opportunity to contribute to the development, design and implementation of the National Food Plan. We will do this in the belief that our ongoing engagement, together with that of the many hundreds of thousands of Australians who daily work for a sustainable, fair and resilient food system, will help produce a National Food Plan that is capable of meeting the challenges of near- and medium term future.

2. UNDERPINNING ASSUMPTIONS

The Issues Paper is framed on a number of assumptions that can, and have, been widely called into question. These assumptions - such as "Our nation's food supply is secure" and "There is therefore no foreseeable risk to Australia's food security" - set the scene for an approach that does not recognise the impossibility of a broadly 'business as usual' approach.

a. *'Our nation's food supply is secure…there is no foreseeable risk to Australia's food security'*[i]

Although Australia produces considerably more food than it consumes, this level of production is built on quite precarious foundations. A reliance on fossil fuels and phosphorous to deliver such high levels of production cannot be considered sustainable in the long run. And our soils have deteriorated to such an extent that we need to focus on forms of agriculture that preserve and nourish them from within, rather than assuming that an endless supply of external nutrients will always be available, or for that matter that continually pouring agri-chemicals into the land is desirable.

Therefore, we would agree that food security is achievable in the future, but ***we need to start asking questions that go beyond the 'how much' (production), and rather begin to focus on what is produced and for who, how it is produced, under what conditions, how producers are compensated for their efforts, and what happens to the food once it leaves the producer***. These questions are priorities of the food sovereignty movement worldwide.

In taking this position, the issues paper runs counter to analysis from diverse sources (as outlined below), including work undertaken and recently completed by the Government's own independent scientific advisory board (PMSEIC). We request that ***the National Food Plan be informed by a more strategic assessment of risks to food supply and security, with due consideration given to the well-being of a much larger population in increasingly unstable climatic conditions, and with severe resource constraints***.

Some further material pertaining to the risks to Australia's (and international) food supply includes:

- **The Coming Famine: The Global Food Crisis and What We Can Do To Avert It**, Julian Cribb, 2011
- **The Prime Minister's Science, Engineering and Innovation Council (PMSEIC): Australia and Food Security In a Changing World**, and **Challenges at Energy-Water-Carbon Intersections**
- **Paddock to Plate: Policy Propositions for Sustaining Food and Farming Systems**, Andrew Campbell, Australian Conservation Foundation
- **The Environmental Food Crisis**, 2009, United Nations Environment Programme
- **Victorian Food Supply Scenarios: Impacts on Availability of a Nutritious Diet**, 2011, Victorian Eco-Innovation Lab, University of Melbourne
- IASSTD (2009), **Agriculture at a Crossroads – Global Report**, International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development

- PCI (2009), **The Food and Farming Transition: Towards a Post Carbon Food System**, Post Carbon Institute
- Larsen et. al (2008), **Sustainable and Secure Food Systems for Victoria: What do we know? What do we need to know?**, Victorian Eco-Innovation Lab, university of Melbourne

These resources should be considered part of our submission and hence essential reading.

There are several authors who examine these and related issues from a longer range, holistic and critical perspective. The current dilemmas facing agri-food systems in Australia and globally cannot be properly grasped without such a perspective; and that framing policy responses in its absence runs the grave risk of repeating mistakes which have brought us to the present situation, thus aggravating the factors leading to food system failures rather than resolving them. Relevant works in this field include:

- **Stuffed and Starved: Markets, Power & the Hidden Battle for the World Food System,** Raj Patel
- **Waste: Uncovering the Global Food Scandal**, Tristram Stuart
- **Agriculture and Food in Crisis**, Fred Magdoff and Brian Tokar (eds)
- **Agri-culture: Reconnecting People, Land and Nature**, Jules Pretty
- **Agro-ecology: The Science of Sustainable Agriculture**, Miguel Altieri
- **Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply**, Vandana Shiva
- **Food Sovereignty: Reconnecting Food, Nature and Community**, Hannah Wittman, Annette Aurélie Desmarais, and Nettie Wiebe
- **Fair Food: Growing a Healthy, Sustainable Food System for All**, Oran Hesterman
- **The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals**, Michael Pollan
- **Eating Animals**, Jonathan Safran Foer

b. *'…food production will need to increase by about 70 per cent…'* (p vii)

Debates around food policy and food security are often dominated by the simplistic assumption that the over-riding need is to produce 'more food', despite ***the clear evidence that the production of 'more food' is not actually the key factor, or the most appropriate political-economic action, in increasing food security***.

The key critiques of the current global agri-food system note that most or all of the benefits of increasing production accrue to those with interests in intensified and commoditised food systems, and not to those who are already marginalised and unable to access the abundant food that already exists. Therefore, simply increasing food production does little or nothing to increase food security.

We will not rewrite the widespread critique of this claim here, but outline the key arguments below your further consideration.

- ***Global food production currently exceeds demand by a substantial margin***. According to some estimates, the world currently produces enough food to feed 10 or even 12 billion people.[ii]

- It is estimated that ***only 43% of grain produced is currently available for human consumption***, the rest is fed to animals, used for agro-fuels or wasted.[iii]
- ***The challenge is not about the amount of food produced, but who gets it***, ***and under what terms*** – the grain currently fed to animals would be sufficient to feed 3.5 billion people[iv] .
- Uncritical assumptions about linear growth of meat consumption throughout the world overlook the fundamental physical constraints to this trajectory – ranging from land and water, to grain, to greenhouse gas emissions, to fossil fuel supply.
- There is currently ***an extremely high amount of waste in the system*** (preliminary estimates suggest that as much as 50% of all food produced in OECD countries is wasted at various points along the supply chain)[v]
- Similarly, the 30 million tonnes of fish needed to sustain the growth in aquaculture correspond to the amount of fish discarded at sea[vi] (UNEP 2009).

It is therefore essential to understand that hunger and malnutrition persist in a world of food abundance. ***Global food security will be achieved***, not by further boosting production in commodity exporters such as Australia and the United States, but rather ***by addressing the gross structural inequalities that characterise the existing system***. ***The major need***, as recognised by the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development[vii], and recently reaffirmed by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food[viii], ***is to boost domestic agricultural capacity in countries that are currently net food importers***. Many of these countries were once self-sufficient in food and even net food exporters, and there is no reason in principle or practice why they should not once again attain that status.

Australia's role should be to provide technical support, training and assistance to developing countries in helping them meet this goal by strengthening the productive capacity of their own agricultural sectors, particularly small women farmers. Further, as documented by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food and others, research demonstrates that agro-ecological methodologies not only boost the productive capacities (and hence incomes) of small farmers, they also do so in ways inject much greater levels of resilience in the food system in terms of meeting the challenges of both climate change (drought, floods and so on) and peak oil (minimising the need for expensive fossil-fuel based external inputs).[ix]

c. '*Continued improvements in international trading rules that allow food to flow where it is needed will…help global food security'* (p vii)

The assumption that the further liberalisation of trade in agricultural commodities will somehow contribute to the achievement of global food security is simply contradictory to the evidence. ***Free trade in agricultural commodities has not delivered global food security***. On the contrary, in the period since the beginning of the Uruguay Round of the Global Agreement on Trade and Tariffs, which subsequently led to the inauguration of the World Trade Organisation, the numbers of malnourished persons in the world have risen by 30-40%, and many experts anticipate that they will rise still further in the coming years and decades.[x] Trade liberalisation has combined with debt-driven processes of structural adjustment to bring about the destruction of domestic agricultural capacity in many

countries in the Global South, and a generalised rural crisis as seen in the growth of urban slums and waves of economic migration.[xi] When the impacts of food price volatility produced through rising energy prices and speculative activities in commodity markets are taken into account, the picture is one of a recipe for intensifying social crisis and political instability. The food price riots of 2008, and the so-called 'Arab Spring' of 2011, bear out this analysis.[xii]

The Issues Paper correctly notes that a high proportion of the world's poor that are farmers, but assumes the appropriate response is simply, and only, to increase production. However, the IASSTD review counters this perspective, noting that "the global trend has been towards a decapitalization of poor farmers and their resources (as well as rural areas), as they experience declining terms of trade and competition with low-cost producers".[xiii] Lowering the cost of food through increased production in other countries and increased import access to their domestic markets therefore undermines the viability of these farmers, and entrenches poverty and thus food insecurity.

Therefore the AFSA reiterates its stance that the focus, as regards global food security, must be on boosting domestic agricultural capacity of food importing countries in the Global South. ***Further entrenching import dependencies must be avoided***, both for reasons of principle and political pragmatism: ***hunger-induced rioting may result in social and political instabilities, the spread of political extremism, and the generation of large new waves of economic migration***. ***Australia will not be immune from any of these developments, which will place intense pressures on the social and political fabric of this country***.

d. *'Australia produces much more food than it consumes…'* (p viii)

While this is true in the strict sense of gross tonnages, it is not true as regards the varieties and quantities of food needed for all Australians to follow a balanced and healthy diet. In particular, ***Australia does not produce enough leafy green and orange vegetables, nor does it produce enough fruit***. These conclusions follow from work being undertaken in the course of the review of the Australian Dietary Guidelines, on the basis of a draft New Food Modelling System for Australia, released in 2010 by the National Health and Medical Research Council.[xiv] The slide reproduced below, which was prepared by Dr Amanda Lee of Queensland Health and presented by her at the National Sustainable Food Summit held in Melbourne on 5-6 April 2011, demonstrates that ***Australians are eating insufficient quantities of most vegetable groups, and that domestic supply is currently inadequate to meet the recommended dietary requirements of the total population***.

The obvious conclusions to be drawn from this data are that:

- Australians as a whole need to be encouraged to eat more fruit and leafy green and orange vegetables, and
- that greater quantities of fruit, and all vegetables in these categories, be produced domestically.

This requires that greater attention be paid, as a matter of priority, to circumstances of horticultural producers in Australia. In particular, we believe that ***market gardens in urban***

and peri-urban fringes should in most circumstances be protected from further urban development. These fringe zones represent some of the most productive food-growing land in Australia, and their location close to major population centres accords them a special place in our agricultural landscape.

Food group- food	Draft Foundation Diets omnivore patterns Adults (mean g/day)	Intake- adults (mean g/day) most recent data (NNS '95)	Change to meet requirements: Adults would need to eat:	Available* minus population requirements (1000 T/year)
Total vegetables	**362**	**273**	**30% more**	**146**
-starchy veg	62	106	40% less	446
-green leafy/brassica	75	57	30% more	-240
-orange veg	75	31	140% more	
-other veg	150	77	90% more	
Legumes	40	7	470% more	44
Total fruit	**300**	**142**	**110% more**	**-249**
Nuts/seeds	18	4	350% more	n/a
All grains (cereals)	**352**	**271**	**30% more**	**1026**
-wholegrain/ ↑fibre	217	83	160 % more	n/a
-refined/ ↓fibre	136	188	30% less	n/a
Meat, poultry, fish, eggs, legumes and alternatives	**157**	**147**	**7% more**	**850**
-poultry, fish, eggs, legumes etc	99	70	40% more	664
-red meats	58	77	20% less (mostly men)	590
-fish and seafood	29	21	40% more	n/a
Total dairy foods**	**684**	**336**	**103% more**	**207**
-reduced fat	578	103	460% more	n/a
-high/medium fat	108	233	45% less	n/a
Other choices- energy-dense, nutrient-poor foods and drinks	**0-10% total energy intake*****	**~35% energy intake**	**~60- 100% less*****	**n/a**

* FAOstat (2002) and home production data (1992); ** including milk, yoghurt, cheese excluding butter/cream; *** depending on age, gender, height & physical activity level

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Further to this, a recent Australian analysis explored the implications for domestic provision of a nutritious diet of different combinations of land and water use, greenhouse gas emission reduction trajectories, and energy supply and found significant tensions between these objectives.[xv] ***It cannot be assumed that a surplus of the required foods will be able to be produced domestically while other objectives are also met***. Further, this report also suggested that for a variety of reasons it would be unwise to rely on imports 'to meet core nutritional requirements'.[xvi] These impending challenges must be taken into account in decision-making about land, water and other resource availability for food production.

3. GENERAL APPROACH

The issues paper is basically framed as if business as usual, with some minor tweaks, is an appropriate approach to developing a National Food Plan. We have briefly outlined five key areas where this is patently not the case.

a. The health of Australians is declining - 16% of the burden of disease can be attributed to food.[xvii]

Approximately 60% of Australian adults, and 25% of Australian children, are overweight or obese, according to the National Preventative Health Taskforce, which also estimates the annual cost of obesity at $56 billion annually.[xviii] The current generation of Australian children will be the first in the post-1788 history of the country to have a reduced life expectancy, compared with previous generations. At the same time, as many as 2 million Australians, including 1 million children, experience food insecurity at some point each year.[xix] This number is increasing as cost of living pressures have intensified in recent years, with many emergency providers of food relief reporting sharp increases in the demand for their services. Public health tracking has revealed that fruit and vegetable inflation has consistently outpaced poor nutritional products for more than a decade.

b. The prosperity and well-being of farmers continues to decline, leading to fewer and older farmers

The terms of trade for Australian farmers have worsened steadily over many decades, to the point where the average farmer must now produce 'four times the volume, to earn less than half in real terms', what farmers earnt in the early 1950s.[xx]

c. Ecosystem decline threatens future food production

60% of our soils are degraded, and many of our major water systems are under severe stress as a result of irrigated agriculture. Australia has one of the worst records in the world for biodiversity loss, much of which is attributable to land-use patterns. The loss of productivity from our natural resources has been masked by the increasing use of irrigation, energy and synthetic fertilisers and chemicals. As these become less affordable and available, the importance of healthy ecosystems for food production is once again becoming very clear.

d. Rural communities are doing it hard [xxi]

Australian farmers report double the average levels of depression and suicide.[xxii] As a result of these trends, the total number of Australian farmers declines by around 1800 every year, the average age of the Australian farmer is now 55[xxiii], and many rural communities are faced with a harsh present and a bleak future.

e. The food system is intensely vulnerable to restrained oil resources

As a result of the logic of economies of scale, the system has become dependent on highly extended distribution networks and centralised distribution centres. The construction and successful functioning of such a system has only been possible because of a reliable supply

of cheap oil. If that assumption no longer holds true – and the price of oil has risen five-fold in the past decade – food will not only become increasingly expensive; the functionality of the system as a whole may be at risk due to supply shocks and disruptions (e.g. as a result of wars and social upheavals in oil-producing nations). The extent of this vulnerability has been emphasised by Lloyds Insurance – "Tight profit margins on food products, for example, will make some current sources unprofitable as the price of fuel rises and local suppliers become more competitive. Retail industries will need to either re-evaluate the 'just-in-time' business model, which assumes a ready supply of energy throughout the supply chain or increase the resilience of their logistics against supply disruptions and higher prices."[xxiv]

4. RESPONSES TO OVER-ARCHING QUESTIONS

1. What is the most important thing you think a national food plan should try to achieve?

The National Food Plan must recognise the seriousness of all aspects of the current situation, and clearly articulate a vision and a strategy for a fair, sustainable and resilient food future for the country as a whole. Issues of industry competitiveness in global markets are of second-order importance in this hierarchy of priorities.

A National Food Plan should endeavour to create the policy framework for the building of fair, sustainable, and resilient food and farming systems for all Australians. Further, ***the Plan should be based on a food system approach***, i.e. one that recognises the social, cultural, economic, historical and environmental interactions of food production, distribution, manufacturing, retailing, consumption (eating), and disposal / nutrient recycling. ***It should represent the result of an inclusive, whole-of-food-system collaboration. Its foundation should be the internationally-recognised right to food***.

This will include clear policy positions and implementation pathways on key issues, including but not limited to:

- ***Identification and protection of prime agricultural resources nationwide***, ensuring in particular that sufficient high-quality farmland is available to meet the totality of current and anticipated domestic food needs, based on a nutritious diet, now and for the future
- ***Recognition of the key role that farmers play in ensuring the integrity and well-being of the country as a whole***, and the creation of pathways that provide viable livelihoods for farmers so that young people will once again want to enter this vocation
- ***The elevation of a holistic vision of universal public health***, based on a full recognition of the universal right to food, as a key priority of the National Food Plan, i.e. no Australian will go hungry, and the burden of dietary-related ill-health will be progressively reduced and eliminated
- ***The integration into all primary and high school curriculums of hands-on learning programmes*** that raise awareness about the multiple impacts of the food and farming system, and why our food and food producers cannot be taken for granted
- ***A strategy for progressively reducing and eliminating the tremendous levels of waste*** that exist across all elements of the food supply chain, with a focus on recovering nutrients for recycling into compost in order to rebuild degraded soils
- ***Recognition of the need to progressively shift towards agro-ecological methods of production*** in many farming sectors as the path to a sustainable agricultural future; and the creation of incentives for farmers to facilitate this transition
- ***Recognition of the multiple social, environmental and economic benefits that local and regional food systems can and do play***; and the creation of programmes to support these systems, study their impacts, and widely disseminate the results

2. What do you think the vision and objectives for a national food plan should be?

The national food plan should through its vision and objectives endorse and foster the many existing and emerging forms of agriculture and food distribution systems in Australia that offer sustainable, resilient and fair food futures for all.

This vision is that shared by many millions of Australians – farmers and non-farmers alike, namely ***an equitable, sustainable, resilient and democratic national food system***. This system is one in which:

- ***our farmers are valued and can support thriving rural communities***, with growing numbers of young people once again wanting to embrace farming as a vocation,
- ***all Australians are healthy and our diets support our well-being***,
- ***our prime farmland is protected*** from the destructive impacts of extractive industries so that the food security of future generations is guaranteed,
- ***our soils and waterways are restored***, and
- ***food and farming make a major contribution to ecosystem restoration and health, and climatic stabilisation***.

This vision is one of a vigorous food future based in diversified farming, thriving social enterprises, and expanding community food systems: from backyard gardeners, Community-Shared Agriculture and thriving independent and diverse farming landscapes that provide good livelihoods, as well as food, energy and ecosystem services for their inhabitants and neighbouring cities.

We see a vigorous food future based in diversified farming, thriving social enterprises, and expanding community food systems: from backyard gardeners, Community-Shared Agriculture and thriving independent and diverse farming landscapes that provide good livelihoods, as well as food, energy and ecosystem services for their inhabitants and neighbouring cities***.***

The move towards this vision is based on the principles of Food Sovereignty, which include an over-arching focus on food for people, and the valuing of food providers. These principles are set out in the Addendum to this submission.

From this vision, the fundamental objectives of the Plan should be focused on ensuring that our food and farming systems contribute to the achievement of the following goals:

a. Health and well-being for all Australians

b. Profitable farms / good livelihood for farmers

c. Regeneration of our natural environment and ecosystems

d. Social fairness and well-being for our farmers and rural communities

e. Australia's prime agricultural land is safeguarded for this and future generations

3. What do you see as the major risks to Australia's food supply in the coming years and decades? How could they be avoided or managed more effectively?

There are two principal risks that we foresee:

- *Australia's (and the world's) continued reliance on fossil fuels and non-renewable phosphorus to produce our food*
- *Aging / loss of farmers – particularly those with intimate knowledge of landscape and skills*

Fossil Fuels and Phosphorous

The latest World Energy Outlook 2010 from the International Energy Agency (IEA) acknowledges a global peak in conventional oil production in 2006 and anticipates substantial decline rates from currently producing fields.[xxv]

"Peak Oil" refers to the "maximum rate of oil production in any area recognising that it is a finite natural resource, subject to depletion".[xxvi] When a country's production peaks, it becomes more reliant on imports (unless demand is reduced). When the maximum rate of global oil production is reached, increases in consumption can no longer be sustained - demand will outstrip supply. The ability to access remaining oil reserves becomes increasingly expensive and difficult, requiring substantially (and consistently) higher prices to make investment in this production commercially viable. As higher energy prices affect energy demand there is a direct relationship with economic expansion or contraction. The current global financial situation, in which the return to 'normal trend' economic growth is increasingly being questioned, is thus intrinsically linked to the reality of peak oil.[xxvii]

Australia's domestic primary oil production (crude oil, condensate and LPG) peaked in 2000-01 and has declined on average 5% per year to 2007-08.[xxviii] This has increased our reliance on imported oil and oil products every year since. It is reasonable to assume that Australia's domestic oil production will continues to fall over the period 2010 – 2030, requiring increasing imports – or alternative fuel sources – to fulfil demand.

The importance of peak oil for food systems cannot be overestimated.

While peak oil is sometimes seen primarily as a transport issue (as mentioned above), liquid fuel availability and cost is critical to the agriculture and food system more widely.

Farm machinery and pumps are run with petroleum fuel and other materials and equipment used on farms are often derived from oil products or depend on petroleum fuels for manufacture. Between 1990-92 and 2002-04, the amount of energy used on Australian farms increased 49% (in KToe – '000T oil equivalent), compared to the rest of the economy at about 25% i.e. agriculture has become more energy intensive faster than other sectors.[xxix] Similarly, the proportional costs of fuel to agriculture are much higher than to other sectors, accounting for 32.4% of agricultural expenditure in cropping, 21.1% (beef) and 15.4% (dairy), but less than 1% of costs for most other industries.[xxx]

Oil and gas are also used for production of pesticides and herbicides and other agricultural chemicals, particularly fertilisers. To fully understand the implications of this vulnerability, we recommend reading PCI (2009).

Increasingly desperate attempts to maintain fossil fuel dependent systems will have serious impacts for food systems and the climate. We can see this in the rapidly unfolding dynamic around coal-seam gas exploration in the eastern Australian states, especially Queensland and NSW, large portions of which have been slated for mineral and / or gas exploration in one form or another. We would make the following specific observations regarding the situation in Queensland, many of which apply with equal force to NSW:

- Queensland does not have an effective policy or legal framework to protect our best agricultural lands from competing uses. Resource extraction and urban sprawl are the major drivers behind the loss of Queensland agricultural lands.
- Existing State laws and policies prioritise resource extraction over and above farming. Exploration permits for coal, minerals and gas cover most of the State.
- A new state planning policy is being prepared that seeks to protect 'strategic cropping land' from competing land uses (i.e. mining and gas). The policy is a welcome step – but the highest protection offered (which prohibits activities that permanently alienate farming land) applies to only 1% of Queensland and even within those areas the protection can be removed in so-called exceptional circumstances. This 1% includes areas covering Darling Downs, Lockyer Valley, Granite Belt and South Burnett ('Southern Protection Area') and areas covering the 'Golden Triangle' region of Central Queensland near Emerald and Rolleston ('Central Protection Area').
- Further, coal-seam gas wells are considered by the Queensland government to be a temporary activity (due to the relatively small footprint of individual wells – not a permanent one (unlike an open-cut mine) and will probably fall outside the new planning policy (although storage ponds may be considered 'permanent').
- The Queensland government recently exempted from the new planning policy an underground coal mine planned within the 'Golden Triangle'.
- Conflicts between farmers and mining and coal-seam gas companies are increasing. In a current legal case a group of farmers to the west of Dalby and Millmerran have challenged an exploration permit (Authority to prospect) given to a coal-seam gas company. The farmers have said the permit should not have been given because of the impacts on groundwater, loss of farmland, and noise/dust pollution (public health impacts). The arguments are being heard in the Land Court of Queensland.
- Agriculture is not recognised as a legitimate land use within urban areas

It is important to note that the assumption of greenhouse benefit from development and use of unconventional gas has now been drawn sharply into question, largely as a result of revised estimates of methane emissions from the wells themselves.[xxxi]

Like peak oil, the topic of peak phosphorous is now becoming understood. Phosphorous is of course an essential nutrient for plant growth. Unlike nitrogen, however, it cannot be fixed from the atmosphere. According to a 2007 analysis extrapolating from levels of phosphate production in Nauru and the United States, the global peak of phosphorous production was estimated to have occurred in the early years of the 21st century.[xxxii] This presents a severe

challenge to the sustainability of agricultural systems which depend on inputs of phosphorous from external sources. These concerns are heightened if, as the Issues Paper urges, world food production is raised from existing levels by 70% by the middle of the century.

Aging Farming Population

It is estimated that 60% of Australian farmers planning to retire or hand over the business in the next decade. We ask the question: who are they going to hand it over to? In many cases, their land will not be passed down to sons or daughters, as in earlier generations. Succession planning now often involves subdivision and sale to developers, or alternatively to foreign investors. On that issue, little is known about just how much farmland in Australia is owned by foreign interests, nor what it is used for. The AFSA recommends to the Australian Government that the Foreign Investment Review Board rules by tightened to ensure greater monitoring and transparency with regard to this issue. Further, we believe that there is a strong national interest, in terms of ensuring domestic food security, that prime Australian farmland be used for domestic food-growing purposes.

The median age of farmers in farm families was 52 in 2006 and is likely to have risen another year since then. More significantly, 40% of farmers are over 55, with 18% over 65.[xxxiii] Australia is rapidly losing its farming population, and because terms of trade for most farmers have declined so precipitously, most young people judge, quite rationally, that farming is a great deal of hard work, requires substantial capital investments, involves a high degree of risk, and returns are relatively low. This incentive structure is achieving the perverse outcome of consistently high levels of rural depression, suicide, and an exodus from the land. It needs a thorough revision as a matter of urgency.

Managed more effectively:

The realities of peak oil and peak phosphorous require a rationalisation in the use of these vital resources. Government at all levels needs to plan for an energy constrained future. We believe that ***this necessitates a rapid transition towards more localised and regionalised food distribution systems***. On the farm, it requires a shift to agricultural production methods that do not rely so heavily on external fossil fuel and agri-chemical inputs. We believe that a sustainable and resilient agriculture will increasingly be based on agro-ecological methods, which will at the same time re-build soil fertility.

4. What does food security mean to you? How would this be achieved? How would we know if/when we are food secure?

The AFSA understands food security by reference to both the Food Sovereignty principles articulated above and in the Addendum, as well as to the UN FAO articulation of the principles of: availability; accessibility; utilisation and stability. The issues paper identifies all

these, but then proceeds to ignore access and utilisation, collapsing any responses into availability and 'affordability'. From these principals it is clear that the physical amount of food available is necessary but insufficient to deliver food security.

Time must also be taken into account – increasing the amount of food produced *now* by undermining the ability to produce food in the future i.e. causing further degradation of soil and water resources, cannot be considered to enhance food security. In our view, genuine food security is based on the full and universal enjoyment of the right to food, and, for farmers, of the right to farm. This means in practice that:

- ***All Australians must at all times have sufficient physical and economic access to adequate amounts of nutritious, safe and culturally appropriate foods that are required for a full and healthy life***

- ***All farmers, regardless of size and economic value of their farming operation, must be supported in optimising their levels of production from their land, ideally adopting sustainable principles which we see as expressed in agro-ecological methodologies***

- ***The production of food must be regenerative*** – improving the health and quality of the natural resources, ecosystems and communities that produce it, strengthening food production capability in the future.

Achieving genuine food security in this sense requires a suite of political and practical actions, including the following:

- ***Implementation of the right to food in legislation at the Federal and State levels***, following recommendations and policy guidelines developed over recent years by the FAO

- ***The creation of appropriate institutions at the Federal and State levels to oversee and coordinate the implementation of the right to food***

- ***Taking the steps necessary to redress the worsening terms of trade which is producing the rural crisis in Australia***

- ***Promoting diverse market and distribution mechanisms that improve farmer livelihoods and create more sustainable and resilient food systems*** – e.g. expanding the network of farmers and growers markets, facilitating the development of community-supported agriculture enterprises, supporting the establishment of micro-food enterprises, supporting local government in their development of local food strategies, scoping papers and sustainable agriculture strategies

- ***Supporting and building community-level food systems***, such as urban farms, community gardens, edible landscapes, backyard 'permablitzes', school gardens, and so on

We will know when we are genuinely food secure by the following criteria:

- No Australians experience hunger or food insecurity

- The obesity epidemic has been conquered and the diets of the overwhelming majority of Australians contribute to their health and well-being, rather than making them ill
- Farmers no longer experience levels of suicide and depression double the national average
- Farmers can stay on the land, no longer do an average of 5 farmers leave the land every day
- Multiple pathways for young people to enter farming have been created and the average age of the Australian farmer is closer to 40 than 60
- Australian soils and waterways are being restored to full health and functionality
- The rate of species extinction in Australia has been dramatically slowed
- Agriculture and food systems in Australia contribute to climate change mitigation
- Agriculture and food systems in Australia are not vulnerable to supply shocks and disruptions as a result of peak oil

5. **What are the most important benefits that Australian consumers get or should get from our food supply? Why?**

In the first instance, Australians have a right to expect that they will have secure access to nutritious, safe and culturally appropriate foods at all times. As outlined above, this is the first priority of any genuinely sustainable, resilient and fair food system.

Secondly, Australians should want – and many already do want – to pay a fair price for their food, one that fully reflects the costs of its production and which ensures a decent return to the farmer or grower who produced it, and which enables them to be stewards of the land. Unfortunately the current food supply system in Australia, in which the great majority of value in the food chain is extracted by players other than the primary producer, means that it is difficult to achieve this objective.

This is another powerful argument for supporting the multiple initiatives around the country to relocalise the food system. At farmers' markets, farmers receive most of the value for their produce, and patrons get the benefit of a direct relationship with the farmer as well as a price that compares very favourably with that paid in the supermarket checkout. The same is true of the nascent community-shared agriculture initiatives in different areas of the country, such as the Food Connect model.

In summary, Australians – we prefer the term, 'food citizens' rather than consumers – through their food purchasing decisions should obtain high quality and nourishing produce, and in the process be supporting sustainable and environmentally-progressive livelihoods for Australian farmers and growers.

6. **What two or three actions:**
    - **By the government sector would most benefit food consumers?**
    - **By the non-government sector would most benefit food consumers?**

Government:

- ***Ensure that consumers are able to make choices about what they eat*** (the essential information requirements for effective free market function) through clear labelling of food, particularly in relation to areas of legitimate consumer concern e.g. GM, irradiation, origin etc.
- ***Ensure a fair playing field for sustainable, healthy and fair food products by removing unnecessary barriers and costs***
- ***Support the emergence of food system innovations that improve access to good food***, whether these are through local government and urban development (e.g. Food Sensitive Planning and Urban Design) or community action to re-establish sustainable food systems (e.g. FoodCare – based on LandCare)

Non-Government:

- The non-government sector is very active in this space. Increased coordination of activity to facilitate access to better food would be of use.

7. **What do you see as the major opportunities for Australia's food industry in the coming years and decades? How could they be realised?**

If we define Australia's food industry as all those making a living from food and farming then the major opportunity is to lay the foundations of a national food system that can be truly multi-functional, resilient and sustainable: creating jobs and prosperity; nurturing generations of healthy Australians; caring for the land, its magnificent and diverse ecosystems, and for the people who live and work within them.

Sustainable farming is building diverse ways of producing food that sustain and renew all the elements of healthy, resilient life on Earth. We are supporting living soils, clean waterways, thriving biodiversity, and a stable climate. We envision food systems whose vitality increasingly comes from the power of the sun, and so which don't wholly rely on expensive and non-renewable external inputs.

Sustainable distribution systems are those that ensure a fair return for farmers and fresh, healthy food is available to all. There are major opportunities as we identify, experiment and scale-up emerging models of food supply chains that really work for farmers and eaters, while providing diverse employment and small business opportunities and reducing oil vulnerability.

The substantial economic benefits of these new systems for local farmers, food-related businesses and local economies are becoming evident. For example, Michael Shuman of the Business Alliance for Local Living Economies (BALLE), and his colleagues Brad Masi and Leslie Schaller, recently carried out a study examining the social, economic and environmental impacts of a 25% shift in meeting local food demand in the 16 counties of North East Ohio (population: 4 million) from local production. The resulting report, *The 25% Shift: The Benefits of Food Localization for Northeast Ohio & How to Realize Them*, made some significant findings, namely that the 25% shift to localising the food supply could:

- Create 27,664 new jobs, and reduce the unemployment rate by 12.5%
- Increase regional output by $US4.2 billion and state and local revenue by $US126 million
- Increase the food security of hundreds of thousands of people
- Reduce 'near-epidemic levels of obesity and Type-II diabetes'
- 'Significantly improve air and water quality, lower the region's carbon footprint, attract tourists, boost local entrepreneurship and enhance civic pride'[xxxiv]

Another recent study from the Union of Concerned Scientists in the USA outlines the economic benefits of local food systems:

> "As they grow, local and regional food systems create jobs and raise incomes in the areas they serve, keeping customers' food dollars active in the local economy as farmers increase spending on inputs and equipment to meet growing demand. Local food outlets can also become catalysts for economic development in their immediate surroundings: people who shop at farmers markets are likely to patronize neighbouring businesses as well. The benefits can be substantial: according to the

report, modest public support for up to 500 farmers markets each year could create as many as 13,500 jobs over a five-year period."[xxxv]

8. **What two or three actions:**
    - **By the government sector would most benefit businesses that make, distribute and sell food?**
    - **By the non-government sector would most benefit businesses that make, distribute and sell food?**

Government:

- ***Support, foster, champion the many and varied forms of sustainable agriculture in Australia*** – as these help reduce dependency on imported / off-farm inputs to production and hence production costs
- ***Protect productive land and water resources from exploitation*** e.g. fracking, mining
- ***Independent research and strong legislative frameworks re: GM to ensure that the risks are borne by those who profit*** (not by those who eat or those who are trying to farm next door e.g. as in the case of WA farmer Steve Marsh)
- ***Application of research funding to farmer-led experimentation and innovation in energy and agricultural systems***
- ***Ensure free and fair market conditions for all players in the food system***, reducing the power of key agents which at present exercise disproportionate control (i.e. supermarkets)
- ***Review of regulatory impediments to small independent farmers and local food systems***. Consider where these are actually necessary for smaller operations (or where they are being burdened with risks that apply to industrialised and concentrated production systems), removal of excessive barriers where possible and simplification / support where necessary so that these requirements do not impede competition from smaller players.
- ***Recognise that real traceability*** i.e. knowing exactly where the food comes from (because you bought it from them), ***is a very strong incentive for high attention to food safety***. Regulation should be focused on outcomes not processes i.e. evidence of unsafe food considered more important than tightly defined processes (which may be prohibitively expensive for smaller producers and processors).

Non-Government:

- There is a thriving movement of businesses, social enterprises and non-profits working to make, distribute and sell food in a manner consistent with goals of fairness, sustainability and resilience. ***There is no need for the government to 'pick winners' or create this innovation because it is well underway*** – it is being led by the 'non-government'.
- ***The efforts of these movements are being effectively coordinated scaled up through improved knowledge sharing***; Government and philanthropy can assist by providing small amounts of funding for experimentation and uptake of successful models; and for initial infrastructure investment. A leading example is the National Good Food Network in the USA which is "bringing together people from all parts of the rapidly emerging good food system – producers, buyers, distributors, advocates, investors and funders – to create a community dedicated to scaling up good food sourcing and access."

- ***The Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance is the first Australian attempt to develop this network and knowledge infrastructure here.***
- This network of leaders in good food systems are providing a wealth of knowledge that we are starting to pick up and apply in Australia, however we also note that the rapid development of the sector in the USA is supported by wide-ranging support from the United States Department of Agriculture[xxxvi]

Concluding Remarks

As we have demonstrated, while the need for change is both unavoidable and urgent, there are tremendous opportunities for all Australians to join together in what will be an historic and hugely rewarding effort of building a fair, sustainable and resilient food and farming system.

The Federal Government has shown leadership in announcing its intention to develop a National Food Plan to guide future policy in this vital area. We stand ready to work with the Government, in a critical but supportive manner, as the further development of the Plan takes place in the following months.

We recommend that the Government closely investigate the concept of ***resilience*** as it develops its own thinking in this field.[xxxvii] We also urge the Government to examine the programmes developed by the United States Department of Agriculture to support local and community food initiatives in the US in recent years, and the impact these programmes have had, as mentioned above.

Please do not hesitate to contact us for further detail or clarification of any of the points made in this submission.

Yours sincerely

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ADDENDUM

PRINCIPLES OF FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

1. ***Focuses on Food for People:***

• insists on the right to nourishing food for everyone
• insists that food is more than a commodity

2. ***Values Food Providers:***

• supports the right to produce food
• supports sustainable livelihoods

3. ***Localises Food Systems:***

• places providers and consumers at the centre of food-related decision-making
• rejects food dumping and inappropriate food aid
• resists food system dependency on remote and unaccountable corporations

4. ***Localises Control:***

• places control in the hands of local food providers
• recognises the need to inhabit and to share territories
• rejects the privatization of 'natural resources' and the protects the global commons – water, air, land, seeds, climate

5. ***Builds Knowledge and Skills:***

• builds on traditional knowledge
• uses research to support and pass this knowledge to future generations
• rejects technologies that undermine or contaminate local food systems

6. ***Works with Nature:***

• uses nature's contributions in the design & management of sustainable food systems
• builds and maintains resilience
• rejects energy intensive, mono-cultural, industrialised, and destructive production methods[xxxviii]

COMMENTS ON THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING A NATIONAL FOOD PLAN

The AFSA welcomes the commitment by the Federal Government to develop a National Food Plan. We believe that the cross-cutting nature and multiple impacts of contemporary food and farming systems is such that the need for an overarching policy and institutional framework at the national level, supported by similar frameworks at the state, regional and local levels, is now both an essential and an urgent task of governments worldwide, if we are to successfully meet current and future challenges regarding food and farming. The development of a National Food Plan, and an appropriate institutional structure to oversee its governance and implementation, is therefore an opportunity of historic significance, and the Government is to be commended for taking this visionary step.

Recognising that the processes to date are only the first steps in development of the National Food Plan, the AFSA, together with other organisations such as the Public Health Association of Australia, the Food Alliance and the Sydney Food Fairness Alliance, have on several occasions raised concerns about inclusiveness and transparency of this process, reiterated here:

- **Narrow stakeholder involvement** - the development of the entire process to date appears to have been initiated and driven by industry. The existing Food Policy Advisory Working Group is overwhelmingly comprised of representatives of large industry, with no representation from health, environment and community groups. The preponderance of issues raised in the issues paper overwhelmingly reflect industry concerns. No fewer than half of the 48 questions on which the Government is seeking opinions concern the development of a 'competitive, productive and efficient food industry'. This contrasts with the four questions concerning diet and nutrition, and the single question concerning environmental sustainability.
- **No public engagement in the development of the National Food Plan** – As noted above, the framework and assumptions that are guiding the development of the Plan have largely been set by industry, and this is reflected in the Issues Paper. As was the case with the development of Scotland's National Food and Drink Policy, the wider Australian public should have been involved in setting expectations and priorities for the development of the National Food Plan.[1] Had there been such public engagement from the start, we would already have made significant progress in articulating a shared vision and set of strategic objectives for the country's first National Food Plan. Instead, what we have is a lengthy document that is primarily responsive to the needs and priorities of large industry stakeholders, and this has set the terms of debate about which the public is expected to respond. Further, unlike industry lobby groups, individuals and community groups do not have teams of staff dedicated to writing lengthy and technical submissions. Given limited resources and a restrictive time frame, many will struggle to respond adequately to this Issues Paper. An ongoing process of community-level forums in multiple locations would have been a far more appropriate process to follow if the Government wished to receive substantive input from a wide and diverse range of stakeholders
- **Lack of transparency** - The minutes of the meetings of the National Food Policy Advisory Working Group have not been made public, despite repeated requests

from the AFSA and others. The Round-Table meetings scheduled for August and September are by invitation only, with many prominent, knowledgeable and experienced individuals and groups being excluded from these meetings. Neither the invitations list nor the criteria on which the list was developed have been made public; and there is no guarantee that the minutes of these meetings will be made public

- **No clear mechanism for coordinating a 'whole-of-government' approach** – as mentioned earlier, food and farming are cross-cutting sectors and impact on multiple policy areas: trade, health, education, climate change, environment, energy, and water, being the most important. While the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has indicated that he is 'working closely with a number of ministerial colleagues', there is as yet no clear and formal cabinet mechanism in order to achieve a genuinely integrated 'whole-of-government' approach to the National Food Plan. This contrasts for example with the approach adopted in the UK to development of the *Food 2030* national food strategy, when a sub-cabinet committee was established at the outset to coordinate the process of policy formation.

As the AFSA has stated consistently, we believe that a National Food Plan must respond to the needs and priorities of all Australians, and most especially those who are disadvantaged by the way the food and farming system operates at present. It is a mistake to assume that there is a coincidence between the interests of large industry and the interests of ordinary Australians; often those of the former are advanced at the expense of the latter, and it is the role of government to mediate these areas of potential conflict. For this reason, the development of a National Food Plan is a tremendous opportunity for the Federal Government to engage with the broadest possible range of stakeholders to develop a truly innovative and genuinely sustainable, resilient and fair food policy for this country. However for such an outcome to be achieved, the process of policy development itself must be participatory and inclusive; and regrettably this has not happened to date.

ENDNOTES

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[i] Issues Paper, Foreword from Senator the Hon. Joe Ludwig, p iii; Issues Paper Executive Summary, pviii.
[ii] **PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF ALL HUMAN RIGHTS, CIVIL, POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS, INCLUDING THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT**, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Jean Zeigler, Human Rights Council, Seventh Session, A/HRC/7/5, 10 January 2008
[iii] Nellemann, C., MacDevette, M., Manders, T., Eickhout, B., Svihus, B., Prins, A.G., and Kaltenborn, B.P., 2009, **The Environmental Food Crisis: The Environment's Role in Averting Future Food Crises**, United Nations Environment Programme, 19.
[iv] *Ibid.*, 27
[v] See Tristram Stuart, **Waste: Uncovering the Global Food Scandal**, pp188-189. Stuart states that 'the empirical studies suggest that rich countries waste around half of their food supplies, but at present the data is too scant for an accurate assessment'.
[vi] UNEP 2009 *op cit.*
[vii] **Agriculture at a Cross-Roads**, 2008, International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development.
[viii] **Agro-Ecology and the Right to Food**, Olivier de Schutter, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food.
[ix] *See also* Oxfam's GROW Report, which highlights the fact that the majority of malnourished persons are also small farmers.
[x] Food and Agriculture Organisation, 2010, **State of Food Insecurity in the World 2010**. The FAO notes that the decline in the numbers of malnourished persons by 75 million in 2010 from the 1 billion malnourished in 2009 was attributable to the improving global economy. With global recovery now threatened and food prices once again reaching record highs, it seems probable that the numbers of malnourished will soon pass the 1 billion mark once more. As to future trends, studies suggest that a rapid expansion of agro-fuels will impact heavily on the poor in the form of substantial price rises for basic grains, which could lead to a 25% increase in malnutrition amongst women and children by 2020: von Braun, J., 2008, **Biofuels, International Food Prices, and the Poor**, International Food Policy Research Institute, Testimony to the US Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, June 12, 2008.
[xi] *See* Sharma, D., 2006, **Trade Liberalization in Agriculture: Lessons from the First 10 Years of the WTO**, APRODEV, Brussels, available at: http://www.diakonia.se/documents/public/IN_FOCUS/Social_Economic_Justice/Trade/APRODEV_Tradelib_Lessons_dec05.pdf. The author comments that "What the report has found is that, ten years after the WTO came into existence on 1 January 1995, the impact of agricultural liberalization on farming communities and landless workers, especially on women, has been disastrous – the past decade has seen rural livelihoods collapsing in the developing countries, leading to more unemployment and more migration from the rural to the urban areas": 7. *See also* Lagi, M., Bertrand, K.Z., and Bar-Yam, Y., 2011, **The Food Crises and Political Instability in North Africa and the Middle East**, *Physics and Society*, http://arxiv.org/abs/1108.2455.
[xii] For a discussion of how these various policies and trends interact to produce social instability and widespread suffering, *see* Bello, W., 2009, **The Food Wars**, Verso, London, and Holt-Giménez, E., and Patel, R., 2009, **Food Rebellions: Crisis and the Hunger for Justice**, Pambazuka Press, Oakland.
[xiii] IAASTD (2009), Agriculture at a Crossroads – Global Report
[xiv] http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/public-consultations/archived-public-consultations/draft-new-food-guidance-system-austral
[xv] Larsen, K., Turner, G., Ryan, C., and Lawrence, M., 2011, **Victorian Food Supply Scenarios**: **Impacts on Availability of a Nutritious Diet**, VEIL, University of Melbourne.
[xvi] These factors include: include: "an increasing incidence of governments responding to domestic food security concerns by slowing or banning exports of food (and fertilisers); severity and frequency of extreme weather events disrupting both production and distribution of food; and potential for energy and food constraints to directly impact on distribution systems, and/or trigger social and political unrest": *ibid.*
[xvii] According to a recent analysis by the Queensland Department of Health: *see* Jardine, A., Endo, T., Bright, M., Macleod, S.L., Harper, C., 2007, 2010, **Risk factor impact on the burden of disease in Queensland 2007.** Queensland Burden of Disease and Injury Circular series 2, no. 6**.** Brisbane, Qld Health, 2010.
[xviii] National Preventative Health Taskforce, 2009, **Australia: The Healthiest Country by 2020. Technical Report 1, Obesity in Australia, A Need for Urgent Action**, Commonwealth of Australia, 5

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[xxi] Ted Henzell, *Australian Agriculture: Its History and Challenges*, CSIRO Publishing, Collingwood
[xxii] According to the National Rural Health Alliance, 'men in regional and remote areas were 1.3 to 2.6 times more likely to end their life by suicide than their urban counterparts': **Fact Sheet 14: Suicide in rural Australia**.
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[xxvi] As defined by retired petroleum geologist and one of the world's foremost experts on the topic, Dr Colin Campbell: http://www.peakoil.net/.
[xxvii] Here we would refer readers to the work of Nicole Foss (aka Stoneleigh), an internationally-acclaimed writer and speaker on the interconnectivities between energy, finance and economic activity: http://theautomaticearth.blogspot.com/2008/12/debt-rattle-december-7-2008-energy.html.
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[xxxvii] *See* for example the work of the Stockholm Resilience Centre: http://www.stockholmresilience.org/.
[xxxviii] These principles are a lightly edited version of the 'Pillars' developed at Nyéléni 2007, reproduced from Food Secure Canada: **http://foodsecurecanada.org/six-pillars-food-sovereignty**