



CLIMATE AND  
HEALTH  
ALLIANCE



Senator the Hon Joe Ludwig  
Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry  
PO Box 6022  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

By email: [joe.ludwig@maff.gov.au](mailto:joe.ludwig@maff.gov.au)

31<sup>st</sup> October, 2011

Dear Minister

**Re: National Food Plan: Consultation process**

We, the undersigned, welcome the commitment you made in announcing the extension to the National Food Plan consultation “to ensure that all cross-sections of the community have a chance to contribute to an over-arching food policy framework”. We share your belief that all sectors of the community, including the health and well-being sector, community groups and the Australian public, should have the opportunity to contribute their ideas to the development of the National Food Plan. The fact that 279 submissions were made, many from members of the public and community groups, is indicative of the widespread public desire to participate in the shaping of this Plan.

However, we are concerned that the process for developing the National Food Plan does not enable the views of all groups to be heard. We are particularly concerned about the following aspects of the process, and have recommended appropriate action later in this communication:

- Membership of the National Food Policy Working Group is heavily weighted towards the food industry and retail sectors, with an obvious lack of representation from public health, community, non-commodity farmers, local government and environment groups
- Minutes of working group meetings are not shared with the public
- Few of Australia’s civil society organizations were invited to attend the stakeholder ‘Roundtables’ for the National Food Plan
- The results of the discussions undertaken at these roundtables have not been made public
- The limited nature of the consultation process undertaken to date has not allowed the broad involvement of the Australian public in the development of the Plan.

We urge you Minister to develop a meaningful and transparent public engagement strategy for the National Food Plan that is consistent with the Australian Government's commitment to "citizen collaboration in policy and service delivery design", expressed in the recent Declaration of Open Government and in the Government Response to the Report of the Government 2.0 Taskforce. The public engagement strategy needs to demonstrate a sincere commitment to seek, listen to, and incorporate the views of the Australian public about their priorities for the National Food Plan, as well as a commitment to report on their views and to include them in developing the Plan.

The development and creation of Scotland's National Food and Drink Policy provides a useful model. The 'National Discussion' that accompanied the development of this Scottish policy used a variety of means to seek the views of the Scottish public over a 4-month period, including public meetings and events, a blog and regular posting of website videos to stimulate public comment. The Scottish Government then commissioned and published an independent analysis of the feedback gathered during the consultation to identify the issues of most concern to stakeholders, and this information was used to guide the development of the national food policy.

Minister Ludwig, we call on you to ensure that the views of all sectors of the Australian community are given the opportunity to contribute to and receive full and fair consideration during the development of the National Food Plan by:

- Expanding membership of the National Food Policy Working Group to include substantive and genuine representation from the public health, non-commodity farmers, environment, local government and community sectors
- Developing a public engagement strategy that includes a clear commitment to acknowledge and include the priorities of the Australian public for the National Food Plan and to commission and publish an independent analysis of the results
- Committing to two further rounds of public consultation: the first to consult on the Government's proposed objectives for the National Food Plan, and the second to consult on the proposed vision and strategies for achieving the objectives
- Ensuring fair and equal representation of stakeholders from the sectors identified above at future consultative forums, including publishing invitee and attendee lists
- Ensuring transparency in the development of the National Food Plan by publishing full and detailed minutes of meetings of the National Food Policy Working Group, stakeholder Roundtables and other consultative forums.

The announcement made on 27 October advising of the release of a Green paper and further consultation provides the opportunity to begin to take the steps outlined above. We look forward to your early response.

Sincerely

## LIST OF SIGNATORIES TO THE LETTER

### Organisations

**Action Aid Australia** (Jon Edwards, Campaign Coordinator)  
**Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance** (Nick Rose, National Coordinator)  
**Australian Naturopathic Practitioners Association** (Eta Brand, Vice-President)  
**Beanstalk Organic Food Cooperative** (Rhyall Gordon, Management Committee)  
**Byron Regional Community College** (Katrina Shields)  
**Climate and Health Alliance** (Fiona Armstrong, Convener)  
**Cultivating Community** (Jennifer Alden, CEO, Cultivating Community)  
**Food Connect Foundation** (Robert Pekin, Founder & Executive Director)  
**Food Fairness Illawarra** (Jenny Norman, Secretariat)  
**The Food Forest** (Graham and Annemarie Brookman, Joint Managing Directors)  
**Food Irradiation Watch** (Robin Taubefield, Coordinator, Food Irradiation Watch)  
**Friends of the Earth Australia** (Cam Walker, National Liaison Officer)  
**Gene Ethics** (Bob Phelps, Executive Director)  
**Permaculture Association of South Australia**  
**MADGE** (Fran Murrell, Co-founder)  
**Nourish Food Fairness Outer East** (Deborah Cocks, Integrated Health Promotion Coordinator)  
**Slow Food Hobart** (Jenny Dudgeon, Convenor)  
**Slow Food Sunshine Coast Hinterland** (Julie Shelton, Director)  
**Sydney Food Fairness Alliance** (Elizabeth Millen, President)

### Individuals

**Michael Croft**, Mountain Creek Farm, Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance - steering committee, Slow Food Canberra - leader, Australian Rural Leadership Foundation – scholar  
**Tania Cummings**, Independent food safety/sovereignty/labelling advocate  
**Kirsten Daly & Rob Harling**, Market Gardeners - OutThere Veges, Peace Garden & Orchard, EarthLove Cafe and Vege Pick, Thora NSW  
**Kerry Dawborn**, Melbourne  
**Joanne Dodd**, Agricultural Ecologist and Educator  
**Fiona Harrisson**, RMIT Food Lab  
**Adjunct Professor Stuart B. Hill**, Foundation Chair of Social Ecology, School of Education, University of Western Sydney  
**Dr Carol Richards**, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, School of Social Science, University of Queensland  
**pennie scott**, Designing Ecological Communities, ACT  
**Julie Shelton**, Real Food Festivals Pty Ltd — founder/leader, Winston Churchill Memorial Trust - 2008 Fellowship "Small-scale food production and local food economies"

cc:

The Hon Julia Gillard MP, Prime Minister  
The Hon Wayne Swan MP, Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer  
The Hon Greg Combet AM, MP, Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency  
The Hon Peter Garrett AM, MP, Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth  
Senator the Hon Christopher Evans, Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Workplace Relations  
Senator the Hon Penny Wong, Minister for Finance and Deregulation  
The Hon Dr Craig Emerson, Minister for Trade

The Hon Jenny Macklin MP, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

The Hon Nicola Roxon MP, Minister for Health and Ageing

The Hon Anthony Albanese MP, Minister for Infrastructure and Transport

Senator the Hon Kim Carr, Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research

The Hon Simon Crean MP, Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government

The Hon Tony Burke MP, Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities

Senator Christine Milne, The Hon Rob Oakeshott MP, The Hon Tony Windsor MP,