



# The People's Food Plan

A common-sense approach to a fair, sustainable and resilient food system

Working Paper: Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance

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“We are a national alliance of people and organisations who are working for a better food system. The food system is broken. People are hungry in outer suburbs, whilst supermarkets are throwing away food. Farmers are leaving the land in droves. Food is full of additives and chemicals that are making us sick. We’ve come up with a plan for a better food system – it’s called the **People’s Food Plan.**”

- the Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance

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***Creating equitable,  
sustainable and resilient food  
systems for all Australians.***

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This document is also available online at:

<http://www.australianfoodsovereigntyalliance.org/peoples-food-plan/revised-plan/>

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*The People's Food Plan is  
a national grassroots vision  
for a food system that  
looks after people and the  
environment.*

chat with local foodies | connect with People's Food Plan participants  
see your feedback in the plan | explore where to from here.

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[www.australianfoodsovereigntyalliance.org](http://www.australianfoodsovereigntyalliance.org)

Draft People's Food Plan launch in Brisbane

## Foreward by Costa Giorgiadis



There is no time more appropriate than right now to establish a People's Food Plan. Food is the one activity that brings us all together. Who has not put something in their mouth today? This is exactly where all the questions begin when it comes to creating a vision for our food future that provides everyone in the country access to fresh, affordable, nutritious, locally grown food.

Who grew the food that you put into your mouth and how was it grown? What agricultural processes were used and in what condition did it leave the landscape where it was grown? How was it transported and how far did it travel before it reached you, the person who ate it? Are you as the eater being delivered living produce? Or has it been transformed into a processed product disguised as food? And why is so much of our food – up to 40% - being wasted and ending up in landfill, when a million Australians or more aren't getting enough good food to eat? These are questions that must be asked about the system that creates and supplies our food.

But then as the eater of food, we must ask the next layer of questions: What was used to grow this food? How sustainable were the practices, and what biocides or harmful chemicals were applied to it? As the final link in the food chain, what am I placing in my body?

This question alone creates the buy-in for change. This makes it personal. When we see ourselves as a sovereign state and question everything that goes into our bodies, then the basis of a real food plan has been created. Labelling becomes the true passport for all food, a full and clear disclosure of food and its history to the person consuming it.

It seems funny to me that the more refined and developed we have become as a nation, the more distant we eaters of food have become from the source of our food. From village-dwelling food producers connected to the cycles of nature and the vagaries of crop harvest, to disconnected urban shoppers sold the merits of convenience, but also an insecure reality of reliance on others. Currently in Australia our food system is dominated by an ever-smaller group of companies upholding an industrial supply and distribution system that has disconnected the food on our plates with the living produce in a farmer's paddocks.

And the intimate connection of food as our daily nutrition and health provider has been replaced by a product: a commodity, that has a price at the farm gate, a price to the retailer and a final price to the supermarket shopper.

When we look at food as a health industry then the significance of a real vision around food and the environment is clear. A new vision and a new food system starts with regenerative and holistic agricultural practices based around locally-produced food. This by default creates food security through the broader significance of food sovereignty. You know your food because it is local and in season.

Conscious understanding of our food and its journey gives us the power to change the world around us. Unknowingly, everyone's food choices are shaping our world, so a very conscious buy-in to a real Peoples Food Plan is the vehicle of change, capable of engaging everyone with a new level of environmental understanding and stewardship through personal health and nutrition.

Now is the time to repurpose and refocus as a community. Now is the time to build an economy where growth is valued in annual soil depth and fertility that in turn promotes a health industry, not based on sickness but on living food. Let's cover the fences and boundaries of a divided world with edible vines and plants that produce new visions and innovations worthy of the potential we have around us. Creativity to drive a world fuelled on regenerative and renewable sources requires new industries, new thinking and less baggage from a world paradigm whose time is passed.

Change requires courage and strength. Change requires fuel and food is the fuel of our future. The People's Food Plan is the fuel of the future. Food Freedom begins in the soil that feeds seed freedom. Now is the time to plant and nurture the seeds of change. I am excited!

## Executive Summary

Between September and November 2012, over 600 people nationally took part in 40 public forums organised by the Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance. Our aim: to discuss a vision for a common-sense, fair, resilient and sustainable People's Food Plan for Australia. Together, we explored the values and principles that should underpin our food systems, including the goals we aspire to and the sorts of actions that might take us towards those goals.

These were democratic conversations – everyone's opinion and experience were valued. This document – a Working Paper for a People's Food Plan - reflects the collective conversations and vision of a fair food system for all. It also begins to describe pathways from the current unsustainable paradigm, to a sustainable future. We stress though, that what follows is a *preliminary* document; a work in progress.

We launched the People's Food Plan process in September 2012 because we believed that the Federal Government's proposed National Food Plan marginalised the many thousands of members of an emergent Australian 'Fair Food Movement'. The members of this movement want real change in our country's food systems, instead of more policies favouring big business. As the AFSA forums have shown, there is a strong desire for a fair and diverse food system, one which will tackle the serious problems the country is facing. Many of these problems, from soil erosion to the obesity crisis, are either caused by, or are unintended consequences of, an industrialised and globalised food system.

The ideas and views that were shared in the public forums both confirmed the existence of a large and growing constituency for change in food and farming in Australia; and laid the foundations of a vision of transformation, and pathways to achieve it. We are proud that the forums and this document have been delivered with a zero budget: this is the product of the hard work of scores of dedicated volunteers – witness to the support for positive change to the food system.

People held grave concerns for the food system as it currently stands, recognising the marginalisation of farmers, the environmental problems associated with the industrial method of farming and the detrimental health impacts of highly processed, chemical-laden foods peddled by the food industry. The key steps for how a sustainable transformation of the current corporate food system can be achieved are as follows:

- Prioritising health, equity and access to good food for all
- Decision-making that is genuinely participatory, democratic and inclusive
- Regulating for fair and safe food
- Reducing excessive waste in the food system
- Introducing food literacy and education via the school curriculum
- Supporting a return to Indigenous food sovereignty
- (Re)localising the food system
- Addressing the environmental problems associated with industrial food production
- Diversifying the current food economy by making space for new social enterprises
- Planning to preserve prime agricultural land
- Building fair food systems through co-operatives, small-scale businesses and social enterprise
- Enabling more food production in urban and peri-urban spaces
- Co-ordinating the community effort in food production and nutrient recycling

Further work remains, especially as regards the goals and proposed actions and engagement with the Indigenous population. Priorities will be democratically determined in a further round of public forums, before we can confidently say we have something approaching a final People's Food Plan. That said, it gives us much satisfaction to be able to present to our supporters, and to the wider Australian public, this Working Paper for a People's Food Plan for Australia.

# Welcome to the Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance and the People's Food Plan



The Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance (AFSA) is a collaboration of organisations and individuals working together towards a common-sense food system – one that is fair, sustainable and resilient. Formed in July 2010, the AFSA is an incorporated not-for-profit association in the Australian Capital Territory. Like many, we are dissatisfied with the current food system and see an alternative way forward, and invite you to join us in calling for a food system which values people and the environment.

The purpose of this Working Paper is to begin to present the vision of sustainable, healthy and fair food systems for all, by outlining foundational values and principles, and identifying some key goals and proposed actions to achieve them. We also want to highlight inspiring models, both in Australia and elsewhere, of real change taking place. The document and the AFSA strategy is still being developed and we invite and welcome further public feedback on its content. We are currently establishing a variety of means, including more conversations with those who care about food, to make this to happen.

We aim to complete this first 'conversation' phase of a People's Food Plan for Australia by July 2013, in order to make a positive contribution to the national debate about food and agriculture in the context of the 2013 Federal election.

However, this is not a process mainly driven by electoral cycles. We want the People's Food Plan be a living document, stimulating debate, and revised regularly as circumstances, policies and practices change. We want it to be a resource for local communities, working with their local governments to adopt progressive policies to strengthen and build their local food systems and economies. We want it to be a rallying point for individuals, communities and businesses from across the Australian fair food movement, using it as a vision and compass towards the goal of fair and resilient food systems for all Australians, now and for the future. We encourage all who share this vision and goal to work with us towards its realisation. Momentum is gathering – and the time to act is now.

## Food sovereignty

The guiding principle of the work of the Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance, is, as the name suggests, food sovereignty. This approach seeks to reinsert everyday people back into the centre of the food system, empowered to make choices over the types of food they access rather than have this dictated by an anonymous, global food system with corporate elites at its centre. How this may apply in practice will be explored throughout this document.

### *Background*

The concept of food sovereignty comes from discussions and cultural exchanges between family farmers in Canada and some European countries, with peasant farmers and indigenous peoples in Central and South America, Africa and Asia. While food sovereignty originally emerged as a counter to the neoliberal project of globalised 'free trade' in food led by the World Trade Organisation in the 1990s, over the past twenty years it has come to embody the aspirations of hundreds of millions of people all over the world for a fairer and better food system.

### *Core principles*

The core principles of food sovereignty can be stated as follows:

- Key decisions about food and farming are matters of democratic discussion and debate, rather than being left to unaccountable global corporations and markets
- Ecologically-sustainable production, conserving catchments, and enhancing soil fertility and biodiversity, are prioritised over water and chemical-intensive methods
- Access to the global commons – water, seeds, land, knowledge – as the collective inheritance of humanity, is enhanced rather than curtailed
- Recognising that people want to be connected with their food, local and regional food economies

are prioritised and supported

- Greater equality between genders, social classes, different nationalities, racial and religious groups is fundamental to a fair food system<sup>1</sup>

The People's Food Plan process is about exercising our collective right to food sovereignty, to hold a democratic, participatory and inclusive conversation on issues of fundamental importance to our own well-being, and that of future generations.

As an organisation, we have identified our core values and principles, and outline them below:

## Our Aim

The Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance is working towards a fair, diverse and democratic food system for the benefit of all Australians.

## How we work

These describe the foundational beliefs and attitudes that form the platform from which AFSA operates:

- Inclusive* All Australians, especially the poor and disadvantaged, have a right to choice of and accessibility to high quality, fresh and nutritious food.
- Collaborative* We work with, network and give voice to the multifaceted fair food movement.
- Professional* We conduct our interactions respectfully and with humility, ready to learn, not lecture.
- Transparent* We are democratically accountable to our members, supporters and the wider public; and our meetings and processes are open.
- Wise* Where possible, we seek and develop positions based on fact, not hearsay; but we are open to intuitive understandings of our environment, culture and society.
- Courageous* We aim to provide strong leadership in setting out a vision and action plan to bring about the necessary transition to new food and farming futures.
- Sustainable* We act in accordance with social, ecological and economic justice, and with the precautionary principle.

## Values and Principles for AFSA's work and the People's Food Plan

The following **values and principles** were identified at the forums. Collated, they now inform AFSA's work and the values underpinning the People's Food Plan.

<b><i>Health and well-being are primary</i></b>	Optimise physical and psychological health for all Australians
<b><i>Equity and social justice</i></b>	Food is a basic human right; everyone is entitled to quality food; farmers deserve decent livelihoods
<b><i>Connectedness</i></b>	Know our food, where it comes from, who produces it, and how; all aspects of the food system, from seed and soil to shops, markets and plates, are interconnected, and it should be seen as a whole
<b><i>Co-operation</i></b>	Involving better communication and collaboration amongst producers, businesses, eaters, planners and policy-makers

<sup>1</sup> These principles are distilled from the Declaration of the Forum for Food Sovereignty, Nyeleni, Mali, 2007. This global forum was attended by 500 representatives from 80 countries. <http://www.nyeleni.org/spip.php?article290>.

<b><i>Custodianship</i></b>	Recognise and value Indigenous people, and family farmers, as land custodians with a long term view
<b><i>Diversity</i></b>	Of agro-ecosystems and food economies; of farming sizes and systems; of fauna and flora; of diets
<b><i>Quality not quantity</i></b>	Let food – good, safe, fresh, fair food - be our medicine!
<b><i>Local, local, local</i></b>	Local food systems build communities and tread more lightly on the environment
<b><i>Democracy and participation</i></b>	Empower people and communities to shape food systems; ownership and responsibility across the whole food system is more democratic
<b><i>Innovation</i></b>	New models, ideas, designs, and experimentation must be welcomed
<b><i>Urban and peri-urban agriculture</i></b>	Support the farming and utilisation of urban land for food production; prioritise green belts at the edges of major cities for sustainable food production over other competing or conflicting uses
<b><i>Resilience</i></b>	Our food and farming systems must be flexible and adaptable; and able to cope with many different scenarios, including external shocks such extreme weather events and peak oil
<b><i>Genuine sustainability</i></b>	Understanding and respecting natural limits; enhancing soil fertility, conserving water, minimising waste and synthetic inputs, safeguarding water for food and drinking
<b><i>Transparency and openness</i></b>	Citizens should have as much information about their food systems as possible, and everything we need to make fully informed decisions and choices; this applies especially to the need for comprehensive labelling, and for trade negotiations
<b><i>Ecological economics</i></b>	An economy that values and supports the diversity of life; and which internalises the true social and environmental costs of our food systems

## Key Goals for a People's Food Plan

Many different **goals** were proposed during the forums. These are the cross-cutting ones which are explored in more detail throughout this document:

<b><i>Support Indigenous food sovereignty</i></b>	Enable Aboriginal communities full access to their traditional hunting and fishing grounds, and fresh fruit and vegetables at affordable prices.
<b><i>Support farmers</i></b>	Restore funding for research, development and extension services for farmers as well as ensure farming offers sustainable livelihoods for farmers.
<b><i>Food literacy</i></b>	Australia desperately needs a food literate population, which means a holistic understanding of food and farming systems, from plough to plate, including healthy eating. Food literacy should be part of the curriculum for all Australian primary and secondary schools.
<b><i>Regulate corporate power</i></b>	We urge the State to intervene to regulate the corporate stranglehold on the food system and reduce the negative impacts relating to ill-health, environmental degradation and farmer livelihoods.

<b><i>An integrated and holistic planning framework</i></b>	A revaluing of prime arable land is urgently required to protect food producing land from suburban sprawl and mining. Policy and planning frameworks that encourage community and local food systems and initiatives are needed.
<b><i>Democratise our food systems</i></b>	We need to take measures to address the ‘crisis of participation’ and widespread sense of disconnection that many Australians have with their food systems. Institutions and mechanisms need to be established to encourage and facilitate greater engagement and participation.
<b><i>Support urban agriculture and community food production</i></b>	Community food systems should be supported and resourced, and targets set. We need to increase the numbers of school and community gardens and orchards, and encourage commercial market gardening by young urban farmers on vacant and unused land.
<b><i>Reduce the appalling levels of waste across the food system</i></b>	As much as half of all food produced is wasted – that means wasted water, nutrients, and energy inputs, as well as depriving people of healthy food. Education and collaborative actions are key to tackling this issue.
<b><i>Fair trade</i></b>	Cheap imports are not the answer to food insecurity issues in Australia or elsewhere. Coherent and fair food systems work for all actors and elements within them, not simply the most economically powerful.

The key actions required to achieve these goals can be found in the “what we can do” section in each of the chapters.

## Acknowledgements

This process and document represent the combined work of many committed individuals, members and supporters of the Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance and the fair food movement in general. At the time of writing, the AFSA management committee consisted of Michael Croft (President), Nick Rose (National Co-ordinator), Fiona Tito-Wheatland – Treasurer and Public Officer (ACT), Fran Murrell – Secretary (VIC), Nat Wiseman – Ordinary Member (SA), Carol Richards – Ordinary Member (QLD), Bob Phelps – Ordinary Member (VIC), Robin Krabbe – Ordinary Member (TAS), Russ Grayson – Ordinary Member (NSW). Others who have been heavily involved in AFSA and the People’s Food Plan include Rhyall Gordon –(Newcastle) Cat Green (Brisbane and South East Queensland), Claire Parfitt (Sydney) Bec Nissen and Neesh Wray (Melbourne) Jen Alden (Bendigo and Northern Victoria), Hannah Moloney (TAS) and Shirley Collins(WA). Fiona Campbell, Genevieve Hopkins and Ben Toussaint have also provided generous support through website development. Costa Giorgiadis has been generous in his support and writing the foreword, and as food concerned Australian folk, we thank him.

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We are deeply grateful to the hundreds of people who voted with their feet and attended the AFSA People’s Food Plan forums and contributed to the development of this document. These folk have sowed the seed for a sustainable food future, and like Costa, we are excited!!

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.remoteindigenousgardens.net/advisory-group/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.rural-leaders.com.au/programs/arlpc/course-18-participants/466-alice-beilby>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.rural-leaders.com.au/programs/arlpc/course-18-participants/476-lauren-ganley>.



# CHAPTER ONE: THE CURRENT FOOD SYSTEM

## Food is the very stuff of life

*'Let food be thy medicine, and thy medicine be food'*. These words, spoken by the Greek physician Hippocrates (460 – 370 B.C.) remain as true today as when he uttered them. Food – along with water, and air – is the essence of life. So healthy food systems are needed to:

- Feed all people well
- Look after all food producers
- Nurture the land, water and ecosystems from which food is produced.

In this way healthy food systems perform multiple important functions improving the human condition, as has been recognised by the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD). Food is not a simple commodity, like cars or computers or mobile phones.

## The globalised food system is life-degrading

Being essential to life, food systems must be life-enhancing and life-sustaining. Unfortunately, the globalised food system of recent decades has become all too often life-degrading and life-threatening. More land is cleared every year, and rural communities displaced in a global 'land and water grab' to keep the system expanding. Family farmers are squeezed to 'get big or get out'. Australian grain farmer numbers dropped by a fifth from 1990-2007<sup>5</sup>; the numbers of dairy farmers have declined by three-quarters.<sup>6</sup> The rate of suicide amongst male farmers and agricultural workers is more than double that of the urban employed population.<sup>7</sup> As Australian agriculture has become more 'efficient' and achieved higher levels of 'productivity', the financial and social burdens on many farmers and their families have reached and exceeded breaking point. Forum participants related to these concerns, as expressed by one farmer:

*Having grown up on an organic and biodynamic cattle and sheep farm, my parents made the decision for me that I would not continue the family business of growing food for a living (in a sustainable way). They recently sold the family property which had been in the family for 125 years because they saw it would not be financially viable for their children's future, having seen their own income dwindle over the years to a level unable to support five people. (PFP participant, Gold Coast, Queensland)*

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5 Robertson, M., 2007, "Agricultural productivity in Australia and New Zealand: trends, constraints and opportunities". Paper presented at the 15th Australian Agronomy Conference: available at [http://www.regional.org.au/au/asa/2010/plenary/climate-change/7402\\_robertsonmj.htm](http://www.regional.org.au/au/asa/2010/plenary/climate-change/7402_robertsonmj.htm). Robertson also notes how young people are not entering farming in Australia: "Since 1976, the number of farmers aged 20-29 has declined by over 60 per cent". The numbers of all farming families in Australia decreased by 22% in the fifteen-year period from 1986-2001: ABS, 2003, "Living arrangements: Farming families", Release 4102.0, Australian Social Trends. The summary notes that '[s]tress, overwork and reduced time for family and community activities can affect the well-being of farmers and their families': <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/7d12b0f6763c78ca257061001cc588/cdcd7dca1f3ddb21ca2570eb00835393!opendocument>.

6 Dairy farm numbers shrank from over 30,000 to around 14,000 from 1974-5 to 1999-2000: Martin, P., Riley, D., Lubulwa, M., Knopke, P., and Gleeson, T., 2000, "A Report of the Australian dairy industry survey: Australian dairy industry 2000", Commonwealth of Australia. As of mid-2011, the numbers of dairy farmers had shrank by a further 50%, to just 7,000: <http://www.dairyaustralia.com.au/Statistics-and-markets/Farm-facts/Cows-and-Farms.aspx>.

7 Kölves, K., Milner, A., McKay, K., and De Leo, D., (eds) (2012): "Suicide in rural and remote areas of Australia". Australian Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention, Brisbane, p 9.

There is much evidence to suggest, that in the current, corporate dominated globalised food system:

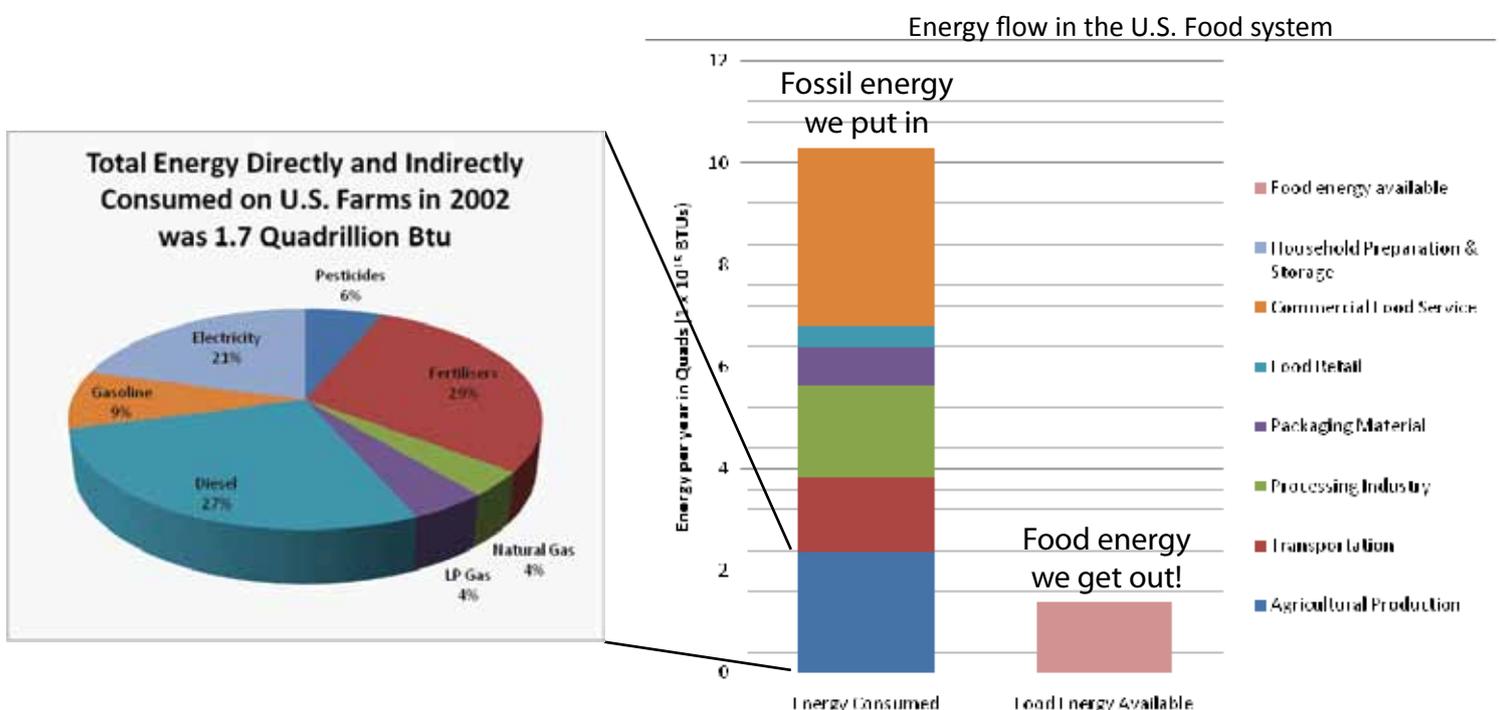
- Family farmers everywhere struggle to earn a decent living
- Fresh, nutritious food is becoming less affordable for many people
- A billion people, mostly rural women and children, are starving, hungry or malnourished
- A global pandemic of 400 million obese and diabetic people is spreading fast
- The industrialised and globalised agriculture and food system creates as much as 57% of total global greenhouse gas emissions<sup>8</sup>
- Industrialised agriculture (via deforestation and land use change) is a major factor in the mass extinction of other species
- Animal welfare standards are barely existent in factory farms<sup>9</sup>
- Resources such as soil, water, phosphate and cheap, readily accessible oil, on which the industrial food and agriculture system depends, are in sharp decline
- As much as half of all food produced is wasted<sup>10</sup>

### Business-as-usual is not an option

*We need to protect Australia’s ability to feed itself – including during disasters, wars, etc. Diversity and self-sufficiency are less destructible.* (PFP forum participant, Emerald, Victoria)

We need to make the transition to sustainable food and farming systems, before resource-intensive agriculture fails due to the end of cheap oil and phosphates, limited water and the depletion of arable soils. Climate change is no longer something we talk about as happening in 2050 or 2100; it’s happening now. Sustainable, lower-input farms are key to permanently and securely feeding us all. Currently, as the figure below shows, the industrialised food system requires in the order of 8-10 calories of energy in order to generate one calorie of food. This can’t go on much longer; we’re all living on borrowed time.

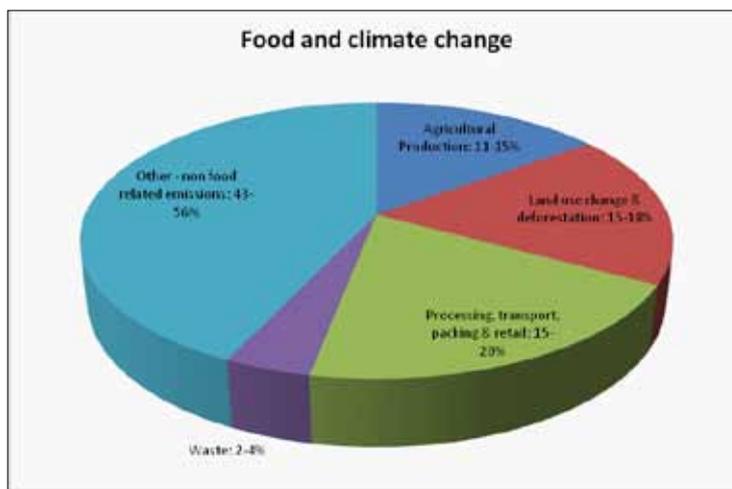
## Fossil Energy in U.S. Food System



Reproduced from Bradford, J., 2009, “Scenario 2020: The Future of Food in Mendocino County” (<http://www.theoil drum.com/node/4884>)

8 GRAIN, 2011, “Food and climate change: the forgotten link”, 28.9.11, available at <http://www.grain.org/article/entries/4357-food-and-climate-change-the-forgotten-link>  
 9 [http://www.wspa-international.org/wspaswork/factoryfarming/default.aspx#.UPXJr\\_JaeSo](http://www.wspa-international.org/wspaswork/factoryfarming/default.aspx#.UPXJr_JaeSo).  
 10 <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-01-11/half-of-worlds-food-going-to-waste/4460322>.

'Business-as-usual' is not an option as most experts – including Olivier de Schutter, the UN's special rapporteur on food – agree. But 'more of the same' is what our Federal Government's National Food Plan, as currently conceived, will deliver. In developing the National Food Plan, our government has closely consulted with vested commercial interests. As a result, this plan focuses on extending the status quo, backing the drive for corporate profits by 'seizing new market opportunities', 'raising productivity and competitiveness', and 'boosting exports' –using a mining industry model.



Reproduced from GRAIN:

<http://www.grain.org/article/entries/4357-food-and-climate-change-the-forgotten-link>.

In this system, corporate profits will increase while the health of people and the environment are severely compromised. As described by food scholar Professor Harriet Friedmann<sup>11</sup>, taken to its logical conclusion the food system becomes a 'Midas feast'. Instead of growing good healthy food for all people, the trend is towards the mass production of commodities like biofuels, palm oil and sugar cane. This is about turning land, water, the sweat of farmers and workers, and the suffering of animals in factory farms into money and profit, at the expense of good healthy food for all. Or, in the Midas scenario, turning food into gold – creating riches for the few but compromising the food system for the many. The narrow pursuit of money in this way is ultimately self-defeating, as Canadian film-maker Alanis Obomsawin, of Abenaki descent, observed forty years ago:

*Canada, the most affluent of countries, operates on a depletion economy which leaves destruction in its wake. Your people are driven by a terrible sense of deficiency. When the last tree is cut, the last fish is caught, and the last river is polluted; when to breathe the air is sickening, you will realize, too late, that wealth is not in bank accounts and that you can't eat money.<sup>12</sup>*

Australia closely resembles Canada, in terms of its dominant agriculture and food system, and in many other respects. This system justifies itself by claiming that it represents an 'efficient' use of resources. But with half of all food produced being wasted – a mind-boggling 2 billion tonnes every year<sup>13</sup> – such a claim is completely hollow. This system, in its current state, and left unchecked, is not life-enhancing.

## Creating the People's Food Plan

*Empower people to decide on the shape and priorities of food plans, not corporations.*

(PFP forum participant, Emerald, Victoria)

These are the reasons why we believe that a People's Food Plan, which takes as its guiding compass the enhancement of life, is required. We draw inspiration from the development of the Canadian People's Food Policy, a two-year process that involved thousands of Canadians in hundreds of kitchen-table talks, online discussions, and national conferences. This process transformed the lives of those involved, empowering them as citizens to state their priorities and directly participate in shaping a fair and sustainable food policy for all Canadians.

Like the Canadian process, the People's Food Plan process is guided by the core principles of food sovereignty. In terms of a process, food sovereignty is our right, as people and as communities, to work together to decide how our food and agricultural systems can be designed to be fair, sustainable and resilient. This process is about us as citizens exercising our basic rights, to hold a democratic, inclusive conversation on something as fundamental as food.

11 Friedmann, H. 1993. After Midas's feast: Alternative food regimes for the future. In Food for the future, ed. P. Allen, pp. 213-233. New York: John Wiley & Sons

12 <http://quoteinvestigator.com/2011/10/20/last-tree-cut/>.

13 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2013/jan/10/half-world-food-waste>

## The First Round of People's Food Plan Forums

Over 600 Australians from rural, regional and urban Australia (see appendix B) generously gave their time to participate in forty People's Food Plan forums held across the country during September, October and November 2012, and we are very grateful to them all. Lively discussions and debates were held at community centres and around kitchen tables. A great many topics and issues were discussed, many ideas and proposals were put forward, and some inspiring models were identified.

As you'd expect in a democratic debate, there were also significant areas of disagreement. Areas of confusion and lack of clarity about certain terms were also identified. We have done our best to reflect this breadth of discussion in this revised Working Paper for a People's Food Plan for Australia. We will also publish the notes from all PFP forums on our website: [www.australianfoodsovereigntyalliance.org](http://www.australianfoodsovereigntyalliance.org).

Forum participants generally focused their attention on three questions, as follows:

- What values and principles should form the basis for a People's Food Plan?
- What goals and targets should a People's Food Plan have?
- What actions should a People's Food Plan adopt?

Discussion centred on some topics much more than others, which is reflected in the format of this revised document, with some chapters longer than others. While in the chapters we summarise the goals, targets and actions, in Appendix A we offer a more detailed breakdown of the proposals made at the various forums. Many forum members spoke of not sitting around waiting for the government to act, and to 'just do it' as already evidenced by many community activities such as the Permablitz movement, backyard gardening, and even guerrilla gardening on grass verges and nature strips. However, greater benefits can be achieved if the whole system is engaged, and indeed, our governments embrace as top priorities the support of fair, sustainable and resilient food systems. To this end, we have also identified in Appendix A which tier of government some of the proposals generated during the People's Food Plan forums may apply to. We have done this primarily to empower individuals, communities and organisations to formulate their own demands and strategies; but also to inform and offer guidance to policy-makers who may be seeking new ideas and innovative approaches to difficult and complex issues.

This revised Working Paper is the culmination of the first step of what is a grassroots-led, national exercise in deliberative democracy. We hope and expect that this process will strengthen the existing organisations working towards food justice in Australia; and lead to the establishment of a broad-based and cohesive movement for food sovereignty.

## About the following chapters

The following sections of this document report upon the key themes emerging from the conversations with the 600 forum participants. The data from these meetings were analysed by social scientists involved in AFSA and condensed into key topics, which are reported in the following sections. Where possible, the voices of participants are drawn up to demonstrate major points, but also to allow the people to speak for themselves, using their own words and interpretations of the food system of which they are a part.

Whilst each of these sections identifies the problems associated with the current food system, they also draw upon the creativity, knowledge, skills and experiences of the forum participants to offer solutions. Many examples of current, fair food activities are also reported, to demonstrate what's possible and to offer inspiration to those seeking an alternative food future. Whilst many of these issues are interlinked, such as agro-ecology, environmental sustainability and healthy diets, we have reported on these key issues as follows:

**Chapter Two**, *Food Sovereignty for Indigenous Peoples*, is a welcome new addition to our reporting. The structure of this Chapter is different to the others, being an introduction to a topic that requires more engagement from AFSA and friends.

**Chapter Three**, *A Recipe for Health Eating*, highlights how current dietary-related health problems such as diabetes, cardio-vascular disease and the obesity pandemic are related to an unhealthy food system.

Sustainable, nutrient dense diets and rethinking of the way in which junk food is promoted to children and adults alike is explored in this section.

**Chapter Four**, *Seeding a Sustainable Farming Future*, identifies the problems of environmental sustainability and economically viable farm futures. Agro-ecology as a sustainable farming model is discussed, identifying policy changes that are necessary to roll-out a truly sustainable agricultural system.

The necessity of *Planning for Fair Food Systems* is the topic of **Chapter Five**. Good planning is crucial for food systems in many areas, including urban and peri-urban agriculture, retail and land use generally. Planning also has a role to play in the food vs fuel problem – where good agriculture land is subject to exploration and mining for gas and coal.

Whilst planning is important, so too is the actual transformation to food justice for the people and environment. To this end, **Chapter Six** outlines the key ingredients necessary for *Building Fair Food Systems*.

**Chapter Seven** explores, albeit briefly, the contested and complex issue of free trade – suggesting a refocussing toward *Fair Trade – Not Just Free Trade*. In this chapter, free trade at the expense of sustainable livelihoods in Australia and elsewhere is challenged. Whilst this topic is global in nature and extends beyond our national boundaries, we say that as a wealthy, developed country, Australia also has a role to play in ensuring its trade gains do not compromise people’s livelihoods and their right to eat in other portions of the world.

Finally, this and all the other issues raised in this document lead to thinking about the current *Crisis of Participation and the Need for Food Democracy* which is addressed in **Chapter Eight**. Having engaged with many forum participants, other fair food organisations, best practice from overseas, and the academic literature, **Chapter Nine** asks *What Next for the People’s Food Plan?* It invites wider participation, both with this process and with businesses and groups taking action now to build a fairer food system.





# CHAPTER TWO: FOOD SOVEREIGNTY FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES

*Native seed mandala by Fran Murrell*

Australian Aborigines are the oldest surviving culture in the world with records stretching back over 60,000 years. Like First Peoples around the world, Australian Aboriginal people have experienced diminished control over land, water and food resources due to colonisation, dispossession and marginalisation.

## Challenges

There are a number of key issues, associated with European settlement in Australia that have compromised Aboriginal dietary health.

### ***Biodiversity loss and hunting rights***

In Australia, the impacts of colonisation meant severe disruption to the health, diets and well being of Aboriginal people. Food sovereignty was taken away from Aboriginal people over the last 230 years. However, rights to land and food sovereignty for Aboriginal and Indigenous peoples are now on the agenda of the fair food movement, here and globally.

*“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](http://www.indigenousfoodsystems.org)

Amongst the issues facing Australia’s Aboriginal people, of particular concern from the food sovereignty perspective is the impact of biodiversity decline on traditional food gathering. Biodiversity decline is the loss of variety in living systems. Decline can be measured through a number of characteristics: it can be decline in the number and range of species in a particular region, the loss of genetic diversity within populations of individual species, or more broadly, the loss and simplification of ecosystems.

Australia has experienced the largest documented decline in biodiversity of any continent over the past 200 years. Under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (1999), more than 50 species of Australian animals have been listed as extinct, including 27 mammal species, 23 bird species, and four frog species. The number of known extinct Australian plants is 48. Australia’s rate of species decline continues to be among the world’s highest, and is the highest in the OECD .

The list of nationally threatened species continues to grow in Australia, with 426 animal species (including presumed extinctions) and 1,339 plant species listed as threatened. Furthermore, there is some evidence that the rates of recovery once a species has been listed as threatened, whilst it is difficult to determine in short time periods, may be particularly low. In a study conducted on 38 threatened species recovery plans across every state and territory, evidence of ongoing decline in populations was displayed in 37 per cent of cases.

As nomadic hunters and gatherers, Aboriginal people travelled the land, looking after country and practicing their cultural and spiritual obligations through lore, custom and the sharing of knowledge, trade and ceremony. Dreaming stories, trade routes and totemic responsibilities ensured that plants and animals were tended as part of their landscape and custodial obligations.

## ***Aboriginal custodianship***

Aboriginal people have six seasons as opposed to western practice of four seasons. Through these six seasons Aboriginal people “farmed” the land. Fire was a necessary practice for hunting, but the practice also protected certain plant and animal habitats and kept the country sweet. Flowering plants were seasonal reminders for Aboriginal people to know what needed to be done to manage the land; and this information was passed down to the next generation.

As custodians of the land, lore and cultural practice was intrinsic to Aboriginal people’s everyday actions.<sup>14</sup>

They had responsibilities through their totems to look after plants and animals. They travelled in small family groups that ensured they didn’t put pressure on food sources. Plants and animals were not looked at merely as food, but were part of the whole package of food security. Travelling across the land meant Aboriginal people were active and healthy as the lifestyle meant they walked over vast distances, and were fit.

## ***The impacts of colonisation***

Over the period of colonisation a range of government policies and have restricted Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to small areas of land or missions, and they were not permitted to leave. Legislation was implemented in 1903 to make every Aboriginal person reportable to the Government if they moved off their country. “Blame the victim” is a common thread in Australian society, where Aboriginal people today are still being blamed for not working and living in mainstream community after being institutionalised over many decades. Indeed, traditional diets were restricted as land was developed for farming and pastoralism, and Government and the Church provided flour, tea, sugar and tobacco as rations to prevent Aboriginal people from killing sheep and cattle. In remote Aboriginal communities, people are still not free to practice traditional hunting.

## **Ways Forward: What People Want**

Until Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders can return to homelands and outstations and utilise their traditional hunting and gathering practices, health and well-being will continue to be compromised. In 2009, researchers at the Menzies School of Health found that they have the first medical evidence that Indigenous Australians living and working on their traditional homelands are significantly less like to develop diabetes and chronic kidney and heart disease. This research was conducted as part of the Healthy Country, Healthy People study monitoring over 300 volunteers living in remote Arnhem Land Community in the Northern Territory over four years.

### **The Key Messages**

Indigenous knowledge about food and land management should be acknowledged

Engagement with Indigenous people is crucial to an inclusive People’s Food Plan

Rather than supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to have access to their traditional hunting and gathering practices, the current food system in regional and remote areas across Australia sees food trucked and flown in from interstate markets and sold via retail outlets at vastly unaffordable prices. Corporate abattoirs supply the major meat markets across Australia; and this market is 100% dependent on rail and road freight to supply Northern Australia. At present, moves are being taken to introduce small market gardens through Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP), although this work needs to be supported and expanded, with issues of water access addressed, to be able to provide locally-sourced fresh foods in remote areas. This requires a cohesive and well-resourced program on food planning and education around remote Indigenous gardens which reduces the reliance on costly foods from distant locations.

It has been argued that the Australian Government policy makers and NGO’s continually put up models based on “white fella” thinking. A food sovereignty approach puts Aboriginal people at the centre of the decision making process and enables a grassroots approach to food production and security.

<sup>14</sup> In 2012 a national campaign for full recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia’s Constitution was launched: You Me Unity - <http://www.youmeunity.org.au>. A central concept in this campaign is ‘custodianship’, which reflects, amongst other matters, the indigenous wisdom that ‘the land owns us’ rather than the other way around: see McMullen, J., 2011, “A change of heart and mind the way ahead”, available at <http://www.youmeunity.org.au/blog/view/a-change-of-heart-and-mind-the-way-ahead-a-submission-from-jeff-mcmullen>.



# CHAPTER THREE: A RECIPE FOR HEALTHY EATING

*A food plan must endorse nutrient dense food. Both organic and conventional production can produce nutrient dense food, however the conventional production system will, almost without exception, have undesirable add-ons, that few people want*

(Written submission, Queensland food producer)

## Challenges

Most Australians are not getting what they need for optimum sustenance from the food system: healthy, safe, nourishing food. Less than one in ten of us eat the recommended daily amount of fruit and vegetables<sup>15</sup>; and we don't actually grow enough to meet that requirement.<sup>16</sup> Around two-thirds of Australia's adult population, and about one quarter of Australian children, are overweight or obese. Our collective weight gain, which results in many chronic health issues such as cardio-vascular disease and diabetes and reduced quality of life, has accelerated greatly since 1980.<sup>17,18</sup>

At the heart of the 'obesity pandemic' are questions of equity and social justice. Poor quality diets result from a variety of factors including the ready availability of energy-dense, nutrient-poor food products, the high cost of good quality fresh foods, the role of advertising and trends towards over-consumption.<sup>19</sup> Obesity risk is almost twice as high for people on low incomes compared to people on high incomes in Australia.<sup>20</sup> A healthy diet of fresh foods costs about 28% of a low income, but 6-9% of a high income; and the situation is worse for people reliant on welfare.<sup>21</sup> In remote and rural communities, fresh food prices are up to 45% higher due to transport costs; and housing and cooking facilities are often inadequate.<sup>22</sup>

Despite assurances that 'Australia is food secure', studies consistently show that around five percent of people have run out of money to buy food in the previous 12 months, rising to 20 percent of those on low-incomes.<sup>23</sup> Australia has become a country of 'rich eaters' and 'poor eaters'. To begin to address this, we need a positive framework for healthy eating, founded on the human right to good food for all, regardless of income or background.

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15 Australia's Health. 2013. The thirteenth biennial health report of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail/?id=10737422172&tab=3> [accessed 9 August 2012]

16 Dr Amanda Lee, presentation at the National Sustainable Food Summit, Melbourne, April 2011

17 Peeters, A. and Magliano, D. 2012. "Mapping Australia's collective weight gain". The Conversation. 27 June 2012. <http://theconversation.edu.au/mapping-australias-collective-weight-gain-7816> [accessed 6 July 2012]

18 Hawkes, C., Blouin, C., Henson, S., Drager, R. and Dube, L. 2010. Trade, food, diet and health: Perspectives and policy options. Wiley-Blackwell, United Kingdom.

19 Egger, G. "What's economic growth got to do with expanding waistlines?", The Conversation, 28 June 2012, <https://theconversation.edu.au/whats-economic-growth-got-to-do-with-expanding-waistlines-6260> [accessed 6 July 2012]

20 Backholer, K. and Peeters, A. "Education, wealth and the place you live can affect your weight" The Conversation, 2 July 2012, <http://theconversation.edu.au/education-wealth-and-the-place-you-live-can-affect-your-weight-7941> [accessed 6 July 2012]

21 Wong, K.C., Coveney, J., Ward, P., Muller, R., Carter, P., Verity, F., Tsourtos, G. 2011. "Availability, affordability and quality of a healthy food basket in Adelaide, South Australia". Nutrition & Dietetics. 68(1), pp.8-14

22 Brimblecombe, J. "Innovative strategies needed to address Indigenous obesity" The Conversation, 3 July 2012. <http://theconversation.edu.au/innovative-strategies-needed-to-address-indigenous-obesity-7099> [accessed 6 July 2012]

23 Friel, S. 2010. "Climate change, food insecurity and chronic diseases: sustainable and healthy policy opportunities for Australia", New South Wales Public Health Bulletin 21(6) 129-133; VicHealth, <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/childyouth/catalogue/adolescent/food-ind1.htm> [accessed 9 August 2012]

## Ways Forward: What People Want

### 1. Access to Fresh, Fair Food

*Food security is not just about levels of production, but about food literacy, the quality of food and the effectiveness of distribution methods (PFP participant Newcastle)*

Not everyone can grow their own food; many people will continue to rely on farmers and growers to do that, which is why looking after them is so important. But access to good food should be available to everyone: it's a basic human right. Aside from 'growing your own', healthy and affordable food can be made more accessible in myriad ways. From increasing farmers markets, supporting small and medium-sized farms and local produce distribution to growing an edible landscape in the parks and streets in our communities and promoting shared and home food gardens, and school breakfast clubs, seasonal and locally grown produce can be made an easier choice. With more small, independent stores and grocers, farmers markets, food cooperatives and box schemes, the accessibility and affordability of fresh food in all communities, including regional and remote centres, can be enhanced. In the process more avenues can be created for young, and often poor, people to access land for food growing.

*Edible gardens and streetscapes allow connection with food for those people who do not have their own garden*  
(PFP participant, Brisbane, Queensland)

### 2. National food contaminants register (for genetically modified foods and chemical/ pharmaceutical residues)

About 300 different pesticides are registered in Australia for use on fruit and vegetable crops. Some are applied on crops when they are growing: others are used to protect produce after it is harvested.<sup>24</sup>

With this in mind "it is impossible to categorically state what pesticide residues are being consumed in Australia".<sup>25</sup> Further resources for chemical residue monitoring and research would allow for clarity around the hidden health risks associated with the regular intake of fresh and processed foods produced within and imported into Australia. Investment in research can augment the evidence base about the deleterious consequences on our health of eating increasing amounts of foods that are processed, and which are a product of technologies such as genetic modification, irradiation, antibiotics, pesticides and herbicides. This will enable better regulation of such technologies and restriction of their use; and would be accompanied by truth in labelling.

### 3. Prevent the promotion of junk food

A clear and strong message from the national forums was that those who produce and promote unhealthy food must have their freedom to act curtailed, in the interests of society as a whole. Similar to tobacco regulation, the food industry could and should be subject to a range of legislative and regulatory approaches aimed at reducing the intake of foods of low or non-existent nutritional or health benefit. Proper regulation of the marketing activities of the industry will save the country tens of billions in healthcare costs over the coming decades. It will also help prevent millions of Australians from having to cope with the pain and suffering of diabetes and other obesity-related diseases.

While the issues are complex, regulatory approaches such as restriction of junk food advertising, stronger food labeling laws and taxes on unhealthy foods have to be part of our national conversation around healthy eating.

#### The Key Messages from the Forums

##### Health is a fundamental driver of a transformed food system

Federal government must implement nutritional and food literacy through educational programs that reconnect people with food and agriculture, developing life skills and cultural awareness around food and its sustainable production

Wide access to fresh local food can happen through backyard gardening, school gardens, community gardens, city farms, edible streetscapes, and similar food-growing initiatives

Food should be as free from chemical residues as possible, and fresh foods can be made available to all by supporting their production, promotion and distribution over energy-dense, nutrient-poor food products

<sup>24</sup> Choice April 2006

<sup>25</sup> Amis, A. Feb 2012. The Dose Makes the Poison? Friends of the Earth, Melbourne.

#### **4. Food literacy and Community Food Initiatives**

*Knowing how to grow food is as important as knowing how to read and write*

(PFP participant, Hamilton, Victoria)

Our own research and that of others clearly shows that we need, as a country, to raise the importance and awareness of food in the public consciousness. Given the low levels of basic knowledge amongst children regarding the provenance of basic foodstuffs and healthy eating, Australians should be supported to achieve much higher levels of ‘food literacy’, defined as:

*Understanding the story of one’s food, from farm to table and back to the soil; the knowledge and ability to make informed choices that support one’s health, community, and the environment.*<sup>26</sup>



Around the world it’s estimated that 800 million people are involved in urban agriculture in some form.<sup>27</sup> As well as reducing food insecurity, these initiatives are multifunctional: they generate employment and business creation; they green towns and cities; they make productive use of organic waste; and they build community and social resilience. Further, research shows that participation in community gardening and similar activities is strongly associated with increased fruit and vegetable intake.<sup>28</sup>

We need a national food literacy campaign concurrent with the People’s Food Plan so that more people understand what the issues are with the availability of healthy food and can support a new vision for Australia’s food system. Increased investment would enable all schools to have not only a vegie patch and a kitchen area for food preparation and communal eating, but paid staff to support a food literacy program. Community programs can be developed to increase and build communication and relationships between farmers and eaters with promising pilots and opportunities for exchange encouraged and resourced locally.

#### **5. Improved nutritional security, mental and physical health**

Food has less nutritional value than it used to. The public health nutrition goal of eating a recommended 2 fruits and 5 vegetables languishes alongside the inability of governments and markets to match food production to healthy eating guidelines. The depletion of nutrients from Australian soils is a reason to give priority to re-mineralising soils through natural inputs and management systems, such as agro-ecological methods (which will be discussed in the next chapter). Food waste issues and soil issues can be addressed by widespread compulsory adoption of the Love Food/Hate Waste campaign.<sup>29</sup>

Eating foods produced on mineral and nutrient-rich soils brings many health benefits. The food pyramid could be rewritten to incorporate a greater focus on sustainability as well as health. An increased investment in research into the impact of food choices on physical and psychological health would also examine the benefits of gardening for rehabilitation, rural community issues such as suicide amongst farmers and resilience around climate change. Further research is also required to clarify the link between addiction and consumptions of increased quantities of sugar, salt and fat. In a global context the question of what will constitute a sustainable future protein source is one that requires urgent attention.

#### **6. Public procurement of fair food**

Public institutions use taxes to purchase food. Schools and hospitals, for instance, directly provide meals, or contract services for the provision of catering. The Jamie’s School Dinners series, where celebrity chef Jamie Oliver exposed the dire state of school food and the associated health problems of pupils, was a popular demonstration of the important role played by public institutions. This is a pressure point in the

26 <http://www.nourishlife.org/learn/glossary-d-f/>[accessed 25 June 2012].

27 <http://www.ruaf.org/node/513>

28 Litt, J. S. et al. The influence of social involvement, neighbourhood aesthetics, and community garden participation on fruit and vegetable consumption. *American Journal of Public Health*: August 2011, Vol. 101, No. 8, pp. 1466 - 1473

29 Originating in the UK and increasingly being adopted elsewhere, see [www.lovefoodhatewaste.com](http://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com)

food system for a number of reasons. Firstly, institutions such as schools and hospitals contribute to the diets of the young and vulnerable. Secondly, they have substantial buyer-power that can help move the food system in a more positive direction. Many public sector institutions have taken up the challenge of becoming fair food leaders, providing healthy and nutritional food. In purely cost/benefit terms alone, healthy diets have a preventative function promoting better cardio-vascular health, as well as preventing diabetes and other illnesses. In Norway, the government has set itself a target for 15% production and consumption of organic foods by 2015. St Olav's hospital in Trondheim, mid-Norway has achieved its 30% goal of procuring organic food.<sup>30</sup>

Support is needed from federal, state and local governments for diverse forms of food distribution. A long-term view of the economic and health benefits of investment in the food system for disease prevention would also focus on health inequalities. Public/community events that showcase good quality, local healthy food that is simple, accessible, affordable and delicious, including practical learning opportunities for people to try, would complement the rediscovery of the individual and community benefits of fair food.

## Inspiring models

There are many inspiring examples of healthy living programs in Australian and overseas that demonstrate how people can gain greater health benefits from engaging with fair food systems, and having improved access to healthy, nutritionally dense foods.

### *Food Literacy for Children*

In response to the 38% obesity rate in American children, the California Food Literacy Centre<sup>31</sup> shows children the benefits of healthy diets by teaching them how to plan, budget, follow recipes and create healthy meals. In Australia, programs such as the Stephanie Alexander kitchen garden program and the Edible Classrooms program in Australia are similar examples. In Bellingen, NSW, pupils at the Chrysalis



30 Liv Solemdal and Anne-Kristin Løes, Organic food at a hospital kitchen, Bioforsk Organic Food and Farming Division. Available at <http://www.bioforsk.no/ikbViewer/Content/57291/Organic%20food%20at%20a%20hospital%20kitchen%20liv%20s.pdf>

31 <http://californiafoodliteracy.org/programs/>

Steiner school run a food café where students budget and buy local organic food, plan nutritious meals, run the business, serve food and clean up. Including food in the curriculum can inspire children to take home what they have learned to influence the food choices of their families and friends.

An outstanding example of integrated food literacy, combined with renewable energy generation and music, is the award-winning Music and Science building at Oregon's Hood River Middle School. Based on permaculture design principles, it 'offers a tangible demonstration of how decentralised energy and water systems, aquaculture, biological energy systems, year-round food production and performance monitoring can [be] woven into [a] school curriculum'.<sup>32</sup>

Amongst its many innovative features, the Music and Science building at Hood River Middle School has:

#### Quotes from the Forums

*How healthy is our food? We need labelling that tells us where it is from, how it was produced, and how long it has been stored for* (PFP participant, Brisbane)

*In order to change levels of food literacy in schools, it is crucial to work with teachers, parents and the canteen volunteers and workers* (PFP participant, Hamilton)

*All schools should have a subsidy for school gardens* (PFP participant, Gold Coast)

*There should be free school lunches* (PFP participant, Brisbane)

*There should be subsidised food boxes for those on pensions and family support payments, supported by cooking classes* (PFP participant, Gold Coast)

*We need to get beyond the budget eating mentality – put the promotion behind healthier foods, remove 'bullshit' marketing, support healthy eating and education* (PFP participant, Hobart)

- native and non-native plants for 'instructional purposes including food production, fiber and building materials and plant-based dye',
- a composter which recycles waste from the school cafe to use in the vegie garden
- a greenhouse with an aquaculture operation
- energy efficient building design including geothermal heat sourcing, 'radiant slab heating and displacement ventilation', as well as solar photovoltaic panels on the roof
- the hosting at the school of the Gorge Grown Farmers' Market every Thursday, where students can sell their produce<sup>33</sup>

#### Food Access and Community Food Growing

Anyone who's ever grown some of their own food, whether in their backyard, in a community or school garden or elsewhere, knows the joys of gardening. In the Yorkshire market town of Todmorden, the whole community has been galvanised by the vision of a few local café owners that the whole town could work together to grow as much of its own food as possible. The result – Incredible Edible Todmorden<sup>34</sup> – is nothing short of astonishing. In hindsight, it is common sense to grow fresh herbs and vegetables in the front garden of the doctor's surgery. Yet, this simple strategy has not only

provided low-carbon food for the local community, it has served to re-connect people with their town, their food and each other. This concept is now being copied around the world, including in Eaglehawk in Victoria.

#### Local government policy directions

The Brazilian city of Belo Horizonte (pop: 2.5 million) has perhaps taken the right to food more seriously than any other. With a long-standing 'food-as-a-right' policy, a city agency was created to oversee dozens of innovations, weaving together interests of farmers and consumers to assure that every citizen had the right to food. One strategy to eliminate hunger involved the establishment of 'Popular Restaurants' that served heavily subsidised meals made from local food.<sup>35</sup>

32 Holser, A., and Becker, M., 2010, 'Place-based Learning: Interactive Learning and Net-Zero Design, Educational Facility Planner 45(4), 52-4.

33 Ibid.

34 <http://www.incredible-edible-todmorden.co.uk/blogs/self>

35 <http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/food-for-everyone/the-city-that-ended-hunger>

In Toronto, Canada, the City government has been working on a local food procurement policy since 2008.<sup>36</sup> The strategy sets a medium-term goal of sourcing 50% of the \$11 million spent annually on food for children’s day-care and aged-care facilities from local producers and processors, with an interim target of 25% locally-sourced food.

Local government food security policies are being developed slowly around Australia. Recently the City of Melbourne launched their City of Melbourne Food Policy document. It is a plan for the future of food in Melbourne providing visions and frameworks to guide coordinated action and decision making to ensure sufficient access to healthy food into the future. Yarra Council (see more below) should also be commended for their leadership in urban agriculture and promoting local, healthy and sustainable food systems. Local governments are perfectly positioned close to the community to take a lead in a range of community food initiatives.

### ***Closing the Loop – Community Composting***

In Victoria the community not for profit organisation, Cultivating Community<sup>37</sup> and the Yarra City Council have, over several years, developed a range of programs that work to minimise food waste going to landfill, decreasing greenhouse gas emissions and at the same time looking to promote the growing and consumption of healthy fresh food across the municipality. Commencing with the Compost Mates program that saw volunteer composters matched with cafes to turn kitchen waste into ‘garden gold’, the program has run in Fitzroy and Clifton Hill and was the starting point for the Compost Crew community composting program in Abbotsford and the Neighbourhood Based Community Composting Centre at the Collingwood Children’s Farm. A related initiative was the Urban Harvest backyard food swap where excess produce, seeds and recipes are exchanged once a month. There are now several monthly food swaps in different parts of Melbourne. Yarra Council now has an Urban Agriculture Officer providing support for the development of community gardens, street gardens and planter boxes. Community gardens in Yarra include those on the public housing estates at Richmond, Collingwood and Fitzroy which are run by Cultivating Community. Other great initiatives such as the Composter’s Composium ( a day of celebration and learning), the Atherton Melting Pot (with Second Bite and Cultivating Community) brings together multiculturalism, food rescue, cooking skills, food culture celebrations and composting on site at the community garden. Yarra Council has shown what is possible by listening to their community and responding in innovate and creative ways.



36 <http://www.nowtoronto.com/news/story.cfm?content=181804>

37 <http://www.cultivatingcommunity.org.au/>

## What We Can Do

	<b>Ways Forward: What People Want</b>	<b>How to achieve this (some suggestions)</b>
1	Access to fresh fair food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vote with your feet and support small and medium-sized farms – buy your food from organic box schemes, farmers markets, locally owned grocers or a Community Supported Agriculture scheme, avoid big chain supermarkets.</li> <li>• Encourage your local council to adopt the Food-Sensitive Planning and Urban Design' guidelines (see Chapter 5) into their planning frameworks</li> </ul>
2	National Food Contaminants Register	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lobby your federal MP for a Food Contaminants Register that would include monitoring of pesticides on food and research into the health effects of such chemicals</li> <li>• Lobby your Federal MP for full labelling of GM ingredients, irradiation, and nanotech packaging and ingredients</li> <li>• Decrease your purchase of foods with known chemical inputs/ biological contamination from GMOs</li> <li>• Ask supermarkets and food companies for full information on their use of these technologies</li> <li>• Be aware that the meat from animals that are given GMO feed will not be labeled as such. Buy organic wherever possible, or reduce meat consumption.</li> </ul>
3	Prevent the promotion of junk food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lobby your state/Federal MP for a taxing of industry on unhealthy foods – use taxes to subsidise healthy foods</li> <li>• Turn off the TV</li> <li>• Avoid supermarkets in favour of fresh food outlets such as small-scale greengrocers</li> </ul>
4	Food literacy and Community Food Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take your ideas to your local councillor and state MP (eg. Mandatory School Food Gardens and/or Food Literacy curriculum)</li> <li>• Talk to your School's management committee about including more food literacy programs in the curriculum.</li> <li>• Join up with food-growing community groups already in your area, or help initiate a new one.</li> <li>• Grow even some of your own vegetables or herbs – a balcony garden is a great start</li> <li>• Join Landshare (<a href="http://www.landshareaustralia.com.au/">http://www.landshareaustralia.com.au/</a>) to gain access to land to grow food with others in the community</li> <li>• Attend (or start) crop swap meetings to exchange excess food from backyard production</li> <li>• Work with local fair food movement groups to start a community composting project</li> </ul>

5	Improved nutritional security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be aware that poor soil quality agri-chemical inputs and post-harvest treatments such as gassing and irradiation impact upon the nutritional quality of food</li> <li>• Lobby your State and Federal MP to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Support agricultural production systems that reverse the depletion of nutrients from Australian soils and food</li> <li>- Support Australia to produce enough fruit and vegetables to provide everyone with a healthy diet</li> <li>- Re-write the food pyramid to include sustainability as well as health</li> <li>- Research the link between addiction and consumption of sugary, salty and fatty foods</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Seek organic or low chemical produce where possible.</li> <li>• Get to know your farmer through farmers markets and community-supported agriculture and learn about the inputs used to grow your food.</li> </ul>
6	Public Procurement of Fair Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Campaign with AFSA for your schools and hospitals to buy fair food</li> <li>• Lobby your State and Federal MP directly</li> <li>• Find out who is responsible for procuring food at institutions you are involved with and make an appointment to see them</li> </ul>





# CHAPTER FOUR: SEEDING A SUSTAINABLE FARMING FUTURE

*Changes in the current modes of food production are inevitable – input depletion and climate change require planning to prepare well and survive in adaptable, flexible and resilient communities*

(PFP participant, Maitland, New South Wales)

## Challenges

With the challenges of farming a dry and arid land with fragile soils, Australian farmers have been at the forefront of innovative farming practices. Many farmers have the local knowledge necessary to get the best from the land; and they already act as stewards for future generations. At the same time, changing global, political and economic conditions have locked many farmers into a ‘treadmill of production’ requiring ever-increasing agricultural inputs such as chemical pesticides and fertilisers, whilst at the same time, prices paid to farmers decline.<sup>38</sup> Essentially, farmers buy their inputs at retail prices, but sell their produce wholesale into a retail framework that is set on a ‘race to the bottom’ on prices. This results in what many farmers refer to as a ‘cost-price squeeze’ where the terms of trade are unfavourable and threaten the economic viability of the farm.<sup>39</sup>

Industrial-style agricultural production is increasingly viewed as socially, economically and environmentally unsustainable, in the sense that there are physical limits to its continuation. Rural communities are experiencing severe economic decline and Australian farmers are leaving the land at the rate of 1% per year, or 40% over 30 years.<sup>40</sup> Environmentally, industrial agriculture is associated with mass vegetation clearing, biodiversity loss, rising salinity levels, and soil erosion. In Western Australia, salinity affects over 50 percent of all farms.<sup>41</sup>

Farmers deserve a better return for their hard work, knowledge and experience; and proper support to

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38 Schnaiberg, A. (1980), *The Environment*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

39 A treadmill, or treadwheel, was originally a Roman technological innovation, introduced as a means of lifting heavy weights in the 1st century AD, with workers walking inside the wheel to turn it: <http://www.lifefitness.com/blog/posts/the-history-of-the-treadmill.html>. Today we know the treadmill mainly as a machine for walking or running exercise. The metaphor of a ‘treadmill of production’ suggests that you need to work harder, or faster, or both, just to keep pace with the machine. On a system-wide scale, this is in fact what farmers experience with the never-ending drive for greater levels of ‘efficiency’, ‘productivity’, and higher yields, simply in order to pay their bills, stay in business, and stay on the land. Of course it’s not just farmers who find themselves in this situation: see Charles Eisenstein’s *Sacred Economics: Money, Gift and Society in the Age of Transition* (2011, Evolver Editions, Berkeley, California) for a longer discussion on the effects of interest-bearing money and universal debt (especially Ch 6, *The Economics of Usury*).

40 Gray, I. and Lawrence, G. (2001), *A Future for Regional Australia : Escaping Global Misfortune*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

41 Australian Bureau of Statistics. 2003. Salinity and land management on Western Australian farms. Western Australian Statistical Indicators 1367. ABS census data from 2011 - see <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-12-12/farmers-leave-the-land/4422652>.

identify and implement real and lasting responses to some very serious problems such as decreasing water availability, and extreme and unpredictable weather patterns and global trade asymmetries. We are already seeing losses in production and ecosystem functions, and this is likely to accelerate unless we urgently adapt farming systems to both the climate and global economy.

At the same time, farmers wanting to diversify and become more 'sustainable', both environmentally and financially, are faced with numerous obstacles and regulatory burdens, as this comment makes clear:

*Every additional enterprise we would like to add to our farm brings with it another layer of paperwork and compliance cost. Fruit and veg are the only part not affected. If you want cattle, laying hens, pigs, dairy, or heaven forbid do your own processing, each incur another layer of paperwork and cost. Incidentally, the total cost for a small operation is essentially the same as for a large corporate, which makes it very difficult for small operators to compete* (Written submission, Organic Farmer, Queensland)

The challenges facing the future of farming come in many forms. Many inputs are reliant on the depleting supplies of oil and phosphate. Climatic events such as extended periods of drought have added to the challenges that confront farmers. Unlike their European and American farming cousins, Australian farmers are not subsidised for the goods they produce, and those tapping into export markets compete to sell their goods alongside countries who have subsidies or lower labour costs. Solving the problems of contemporary farming are far from straight-forward. The sheer size and scale of Australia means we produce enough food to feed 60 million people, but, as a nation, we are also locked into intensive, industrial-style commodity production that is reliant on export. Many have conceptualised this as an export of water as well as soil nutrients – but the distance to markets from much of Australia's food producing land has left little alternative if those lands are to continue to produce food and fibre. In the absence of a direct crisis, these 'wicked problems' have no quick fix solution, however, the following section describes a step in a sustainable direction that will alleviate some of the negative aspects associated with food production in this country.

## Ways Forward: What People Want

People in the forums valued farming and farmers and held concerns about their ability to farm sustainability into the future under present conditions, including the supermarkets' squeeze on price. As noted above, many farmers are caring for the environment, without the deserved recognition for what is essentially a public good activity (for example, protecting waterways through fencing). The reduced profitability in farming makes it more difficult for farmers to invest in land management activities, and indeed, many farmers are merely surviving, or exiting family farming completely. There is much evidence in the literature about the benefits of sustainable farming, not just for the environment, but for sustainable diets and higher premiums for quality products. This next section explores agro-ecology as a more resilient model for Australian agriculture.

### 1. Agro-ecology – a viable model for sustainable farming in Australia?

The vision for a sustainable agriculture that was described by many participants of the forum was a system of farming that values farmers, animals and the environment. We describe this in this document in terms of agro-ecology. Agro-ecology is a complex, evolving and multi-disciplinary area.<sup>42</sup> It is concerned with the interconnectedness and inter-relationship of systems: agriculture, eco-systems, landscapes, waterways, climate, and socio-economic systems. It does not propose a 'one-size fits all' approach or model, but rather requires site-specific understandings of particular farms and bio-regions in order to assess

### The Key Messages from the Forums

Promote awareness of farming and food growing in school curriculums and amongst the general Australian public

A truly sustainable agriculture must be regenerative; that is, it must be based on increasing levels of soil fertility, biodiversity and safeguarded water sources

Prioritise resources to provide research, development and extension services for farmers transitioning to lower-input, regenerative forms of agriculture

Protect farmers whose land is contaminated with GM crops

42 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agroecology>

whether or not particular technologies or inputs are or are not appropriate, given the goals of farm productivity and resource conservation.

*Agroecology is a scientific discipline that uses ecological theory to study, design, manage and evaluate agricultural systems that are productive but also resource conserving. Agroecological research considers interactions of all important biophysical, technical and socioeconomic components of farming systems and regards these systems as the fundamental units of study, where mineral cycles, energy transformations, biological processes and socioeconomic relationships are analyzed as a whole in an interdisciplinary fashion.*

– Miguel Altieri (<http://agroeco.org/>)

Professor Miguel Altieri's definition, reproduced adjacent, makes this clear. As we said in the draft discussion document, 400 of the world's leading agricultural scientists<sup>43</sup>, and the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food<sup>44</sup>, have identified agro-ecology as an important way forward for global agriculture. Many Australian farmers are already implementing agro-ecological principles, which include:

- maintenance of water, nutrient, carbon and energy flows within the farm;
- integration of crops and livestock;
- diversification of crops and livestock species; and
- a focus on interactions and productivity throughout the agricultural system, rather than a focus on individual species.<sup>45</sup>

That said, agro-ecology as a term is unfamiliar in the Australian context, and we wish to further explore its potential application here through working groups in 2013, and beyond. The info-graphic on the following page, comparing the industrialised food system with agro-ecology, provides some background to this discussion. It is the work of the Christensen Fund, a San Francisco-based private foundation focused on programs supporting biocultural diversity.<sup>46</sup>

## **2. Raise levels of farm viability**

*The food system needs to include factors that support the mental well-being of rural communities, such as fair prices for produce, and support to cope in extreme weather*

(PFP participant, Hobart, Tasmania)

In simple financial terms, this requires that levels of average farm debt must be reduced, and levels of average net farm income increased. For Australian broadacre and dairy farms, average farm debt has risen by more than 250 per cent, to over \$500,000 per farm, in the two decades since 1990-91.<sup>47</sup> The conventional wisdom is that the only path to viability is via structural adjustment (i.e. fewer and bigger farms), with more high-tech and expensive machinery, and the embrace of new technologies, in particular genetically-modified seeds; all of this is said to result in new productivity gains and higher yields. Given that this path hasn't worked for many thousands of farmers who have abandoned farming, will it work for those remaining; and more importantly, for those who might want to enter farming?

## **3. Reverse the exodus from farming**

Forum participants told us that the logic of economic rationality, productivity and efficiency has its limits, which we are now seeing in many ways. If we want thriving rural and regional communities, and if we want to guarantee our food security into the future, and do so sustainably, we need a diverse and thriving farming population. Above all, we need young people to choose to enter agriculture, and provide pathways which make it possible for them to do so, without immediately sinking under a mountain of debt. As the

43 IAASTD, <http://agassessment.org/> [accessed 18 July 2012]

44 DeSchutter, O. and Vanloqueren, G. 2011. "The New Green Revolution: How Twenty-First-Century Science Can Feed the World" *The Solutions Journal*, 2(4) pp.33-44. <http://www.thesolutionsjournal.com/node/971> [accessed 18 July 2012]

45 Ibid.

46 <http://www.christensenfund.org/about/>.

47 Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Science, 2011. "Australian farm survey results, 2008-9 to 2010-11". April 2011, Australian Government, pp21-2. Available at [http://adl.brs.gov.au/data/warehouse/pe\\_abares99001805/FarmSurveyResults2011.pdf](http://adl.brs.gov.au/data/warehouse/pe_abares99001805/FarmSurveyResults2011.pdf). The largest increase in debt has been borrowing to invest in new plant and equipment, followed by borrowing to fund land purchases, the single largest component of farm debt: *ibid*.

great American agrarian philosopher, poet and farmer, Wendell Berry, puts it, in order for what he terms ‘good farming’ – that is, ‘farming that does not destroy either farmland or farm people’ – to take place, there must be a ‘proper’ or ‘correct ratio’ between farmers and farm workers, and the number and size of farms, combined with a ‘proper ratio between plants and animals.’<sup>48</sup>

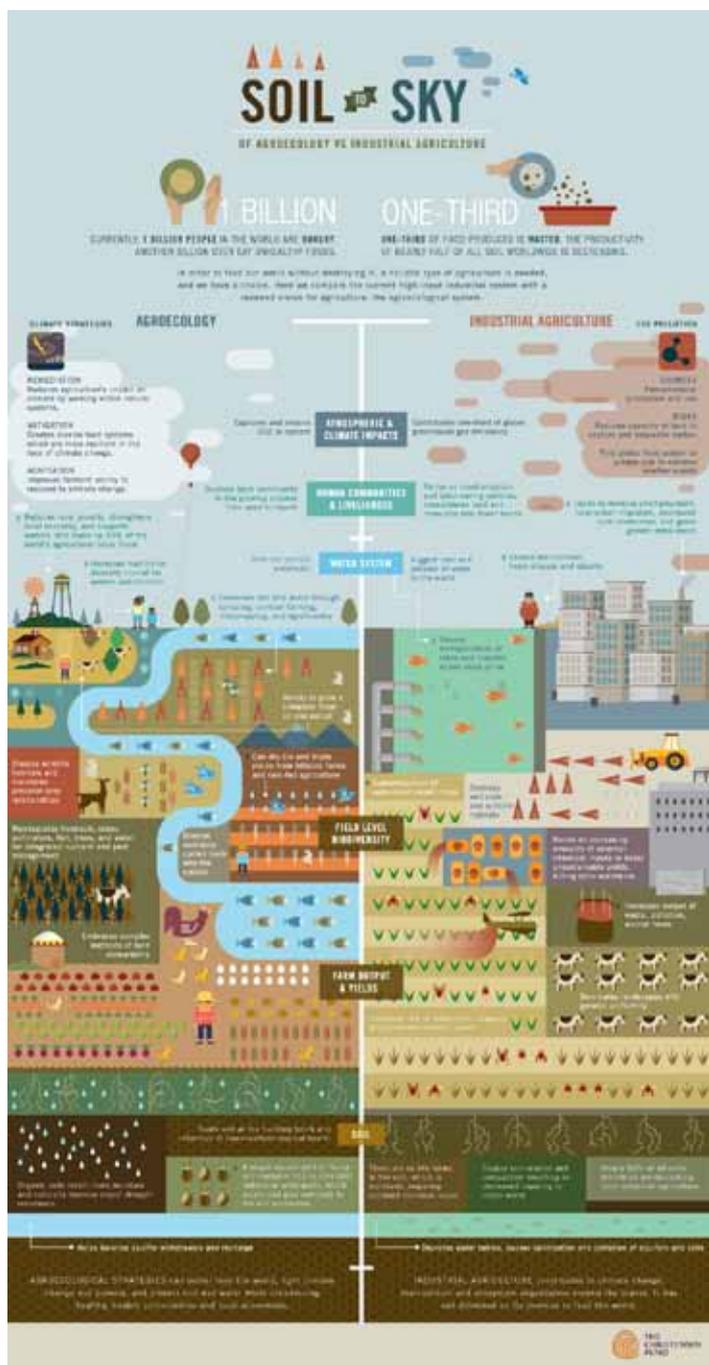
**4. Urban farms for every town and city**

The theme of local food was closely linked in the minds of many participants to urban and community food initiatives. There is little doubt that urban agriculture, in diverse forms, is an emerging trend in Australia. As part of a comprehensive food literacy program, forum participants urged the incorporation of programs within all schools to educate about diet, agriculture, water security and sustainability principles. Participants also urged the setting of a target of school veggie gardens in all high schools by 2020, to build skills, knowledge and awareness: ‘to start life with good habits, healthy kids and a healthy future.’

We maintain that a common-sense food plan for Australia’s future must include a greater independent investment program for sustainable agriculture innovations, including urban and community food production. This is especially important, having regard to persistent and rising levels of food insecurity amongst less well-off Australians; and in an era of volatility and uncertainty in the globalised food system.

**5. Research, Development and Extension**

In Australia, Federal government policy over several decades means that public investment in agricultural research and development is declining. Funding for state agricultural departments, the CSIRO and universities is being cut, forcing those institutions to partner up with private companies, which means that research is biased towards technologies that have the potential to generate profits for agri-business corporations. Government-funded extension services, which support farmers to innovate and adapt, have been dismantled. If Australia is to make a wholesale shift toward a low carbon, sustainable farming future, and within the current and future resource limits (water, oil, arable land) new methods are required. Investment in researching sustainable food production methods is urgent; and extension services need to be reinstated to pass on new innovations to farmers and to support the farming community to adapt to changing conditions.



The Christensen Fund: Soil to Sky of agroecology vs industrial agriculture

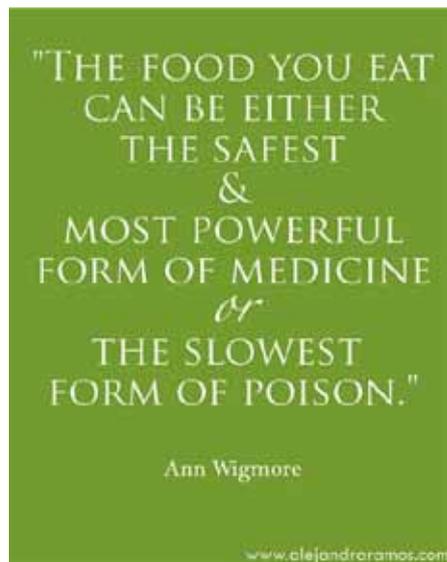
48 Berry, W., 2002, Stupidity in Concentration in Bringing it to the Table: On Farming and Food, Counterpoint Press (2009).

## 6. Apply Precautionary Principle for new technologies like GMOs

Many forums also discussed the question of new technologies, such as genetically modified organisms. It was agreed that little was known about the adverse impacts of genetically modified foods and feed, and that there seems to be evidence that they have proven harmful to laboratory animals. Other concerns were the contamination of crops and public land, as evidenced by the Western Australian case in 2010 where farmer Steve Marsh lost his organic certification when his farm was contaminated by GM canola from a neighbouring farm. Some participants felt that GMOs should be banned completely, while others felt that a moratorium should be in place while their long-term impacts on human health and the environment were investigated and properly understood, and appropriate laws and regulations implemented to mitigate the risk of the new technology and novel food. The precautionary principle is a common-sense approach which derived from the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) report, led by then Norwegian Prime Minister, Gro Harlem-Brundtland. The precautionary approach states if an action or policy has a suspected risk of causing harm to either the public, or the environment – then the burden of proof is that “not harmful” falls on those taking the action. In other words, in the absence of proof that GMOs are not harmful, the use of GMO seeds should not be used until they are proven safe.

### Inspiring models

*We felt that often a lot of the time there is no recognition for all the things farmers are doing on their farms – or perhaps it's more that people outside the farming world just don't know because it's not well communicated. It's time to recognize all the good things that farmers are already doing, rather than thinking that only good things will happen in the future. For example – one of the couples at the meeting feed 140 head of cattle on 450 Ha native pastures and have a 25Ha wetland. (PFP forum participant, Barham)*



#### **Pro Huerta Movement**

The potential of agro-ecology can be seen in the experience of the *Pro Huerta* movement in Argentina. Since 1990, this nationwide movement in a country of 41 million people, has, through a 700-strong network of professional advisors and technicians, together with 19,000 volunteers, helped build in excess of 600,000 market gardens and 140,000 small-scale farms, addressing pressing food security needs of millions of poor Argentinians, as well as strengthening local economies.<sup>49</sup>

#### **RegenAg and Milkwood Permaculture, Australia**

Many Australian farmers are proactively managing their farms to restore soils and landscapes, while improving their farm viability. RegenAG<sup>50</sup> runs courses in notable practices such as:

- *Holistic Management* – mixed livestock and cropping, and land management practices to enhance biodiversity
- *Pasture cropping* – ‘sowing crops into living perennial (usually native) pastures’
- *Riparian and watershed restoration* – ‘practical, natural materials and good design to repair and restore the most degraded gullies, creeks and floodplains back to their natural capacity as moisture-rich landscapes’
- *On-farm biofertilisers* – replacing expensive artificial fertilisers with fertilisers made on farms from non-chemical sources
- *Localised food systems* – adopting the Joel Salatin ‘polyface model’ of ‘redemption agriculture’: ‘healing the land, healing the food, healing the economy, healing the culture’.<sup>51</sup>

49 Cittadini, R., 2010, “Cuando comer es un problema: Las causas de persistencia del hambre en el mundo y la Argentina” (voicesenfenix.com).

50 <http://www.regenag.com/>

51 <http://www.polyfacefarms.com/>

Two of the members of RegenAG – ‘an alliance of farming families who are committed to helping regenerate Australia’s farms, soils, communities and on-farm livelihoods’ – are Nick Ritar and Kirsten Bradley, who founded Milkwood Permaculture near Mudgee, NSW in 2007. Initially intended to be a small commercial farm operating on permaculture principles, Milkwood Farm is now ‘an emerging social enterprise comprising dedicated growers managing complimentary enterprises such as a market garden, forest garden and animals system’, as well as an educational facility offering a diverse range of courses and workshops.<sup>52</sup>

### **Intervale Center, Vermont, USA**

The operation of a commercial farm as a diverse social enterprise and educational facility has been pioneered at the Intervale Center<sup>53</sup> near Burlington, Vermont, USA. From a single property, the Intervale Center – a ‘non-profit that engages local farmers and eaters at every step of the supply chain of local food, from pre-production planning to post-consumer waste disposal’ - has established multiple mutually-supportive yet independent farm businesses, which are now producing in excess of \$1 million worth of organic produce for local consumption each year.<sup>54</sup>

The Intervale Center’s diverse business model encompasses:

- Agro-forestry operations that provide sustainably grown wood-chips to generate the bulk of Burlington’s electrical supply
- A composting business which takes the city’s organic waste and converts it to compost and topsoil, which is sold commercially to farms, nurseries and households
- A farm business incubator enterprise for new farmers, including the provision of access to land, infrastructure and equipment
- A business consulting service for more established farmers
- Vermont’s first and largest multi-farm community-supported agriculture enterprise
- A local food education program for young people
- A conservation nursery, growing natives for riparian restoration programs

In addition, the Intervale Center conducts producer surveys, market research amongst consumers, and strategic food systems research. It also runs annual gleaning and food rescue programs to address issues of acute and chronic food insecurity, in partnership with neighbouring farms.

### **Quotes from the Forums**

*Industrial agriculture is about producing more food, leading to more concentration. Efficiency is the opposite of resilience (PFP Participant, Bellingen, New South Wales)*

*Many farmers would like to move to more sustainable farming practices but are so squeezed by the current system they are forced to cut costs to the minimum just to survive. There needs to be ‘breathing space’ for farmers to start implementing alternative and more sustainable practices. (PFP participant, Hamilton, New South Wales)*

*I’m earning \$30 / hr working in early childcare. As a farmer I was earning zilch. I’m not farming any more! (PFP Participant, Bellingen, New South Wales)*

*We’re losing knowledge and interest as young people aren’t taking up farming as a livelihood. How do local producers make a living? It isn’t addressed. This is the biggest gap and issue (PFP participant, Brisbane, Queensland)*

*Most Australians are separated from agriculture and don’t realise it’s not quite like a community garden, i.e. dust, light noise etc. Do we need to plan and get people to accept that this is what food growing is actually like? (PFP Participant, Brisbane Square Library forum)*

*It’s very hard for farmers not to think about being productive and efficient and to go backwards. For a lot of farmers it’s not just about making money, it’s about getting better and better at producing something and making it more efficient, as well as looking after our environment. (PFP participant, Barham, New South Wales)*

52 <http://milkwoodpermaculture.com.au/about-us>

53 <http://www.intervale.org/>

54 Shuman, M., Barron, A., and Wasserman, W. 2009. *Community Food Enterprise: Local Success in a Global Marketplace*. Wallace Center, Arlington, VA.

In 2008, the Intervale Center generated a turnover of \$US2,154,874, and employed 14 workers. Placing a premium on the financial sustainability of its programs has meant that

*The Intervale is an incredible platform for young aspiring farmers to take a risk and launch an enterprise, and when they emerge from incubator status they are prepared to pay market rates to continue. It has proven to be a great model for establishing viable sustainable organic farm enterprises.*<sup>55</sup>

The development of an integrated business model which overcomes the barriers to entry for young farmers, nurtures and supports them in building their capacity, and which provides them with local and fair-priced markets in which to sell their produce (via the Intervale Food Hub Community-Supported Agriculture enterprise), has been ground-breaking. Its significance in the Australian context in which, as noted, there is a demographic crisis amongst the farming population, cannot be overstated. Enterprises like these are bringing about a cultural shift in attitudes in the United States, where farming and food production are seen by growing numbers of young people as a 'cool' thing to do.

### ***The Tucker Patch, Gloucester, New South Wales***

A similar initiative in Australia, though at a much smaller scale and earlier stage of development, is the Tucker Patch, a demonstration garden in Gloucester, NSW funded under the State Government's Community Builders program. The Tucker Patch is run by the Gloucester Project as part of its 'Food Bowl' initiative, 'aimed at creating self-sustaining regional communities'.<sup>56</sup> The Tucker Patch is an integrated regional economic development and environmental initiative, aimed at supporting local farmers, training a new agricultural workforce, and building levels of regional security in the face of climate change and peak oil.

### ***Farm to school, United States***

Participants in every forum highlighted the need for education and awareness-raising, from young children through to the adult population, about all aspects of farming and food production, as well as healthy eating and nutrition. In the US, the National Farm to School Network has begun to meet this objective through a highly practical program that:

*Connects schools and local farms with the objectives of serving healthy meals in school cafeterias, improving student nutrition, providing agriculture, health and nutrition education opportunities, and supporting local and regional farmers.*<sup>57</sup>

In little over ten years, the Farm to School network has expanded from pilots in a few schools to now having a presence in 'more than 10,000 schools across 50 states'.<sup>58</sup> Its many demonstrated benefits include the following:

- Educating children about agriculture, food, nutrition and the environment
- Increasing children's consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables
- Supporting local economic development and job creation
- Expanding market opportunities for farmers and food processors
- Shortening food supply chains and reducing the carbon intensity of the food system

In Australia, the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program<sup>59</sup> has been the driving force behind kitchen gardens in 260 Australian Schools, with 35,000 school-children reaping the benefits. While acknowledging these achievements, forum participants also noted that some of the financial constraints of the Stephanie Alexander program meant that it was not accessible to all schools; and hence there was a need to explore alternatives outside this model.

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55 Glenn McRae, Executive Director, Intervale Center (quoted in Shuman et al 2012).

56 <http://www.tuckerpatch.com.au/about.html>.

57 <http://www.farmtoschool.org/>.

58 <http://www.farmtoschool.org/aboutus.php>.

59 <http://www.kitchengardenfoundation.org.au/>

## **City to Soil / Groundswell, New South Wales**

A key principle of regenerative agriculture – and of genuine sustainability - is building soil fertility through increasing its organic content. Holistic management practices and the incorporation of livestock into farming operations provides a ready source of manure. The potential for this to be supplemented by community composting, facilitated by local councils and businesses, is enormous. Currently around 40% to 70% of urban waste going to landfill is organic material.<sup>60</sup>

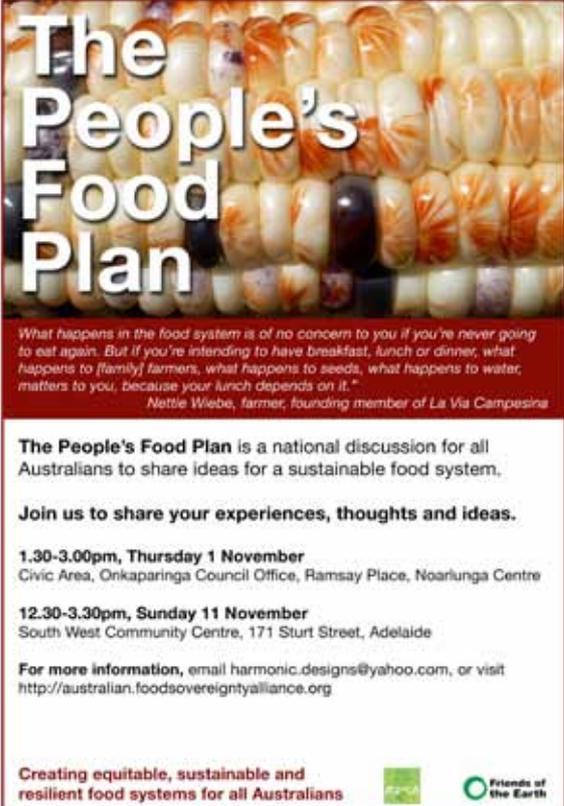
The 'City to Soil' project, involving the collection and composting of urban organic waste, and returning it at cost to local farmers, was successfully run in 2004 by Queanbeyan City Council and the South East Office of the NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water. A multi-stakeholder Groundswell project was then trialled with crops and grazing pastures in various sites in 2009-10 in order to prove the value of this model, by:

Having farmers and Councils working together to pull urban organic waste out of the cities and back onto agricultural land, simultaneously reducing organic waste to landfill and used instead for the improvement of agricultural soils.<sup>61</sup>

Despite the very dry conditions during the trial period, the results on soil moisture retention and nutrient content were enough to demonstrate the benefits of the model. In September 2011, Armidale Dumaresq Council (NSW Tablelands) launched a pilot project (Groundswell), involving 200 families, who received a specially designed kitchen bench top bin and a years' supply of compostable biobags to collect food scraps.<sup>62</sup> The compost is now available for sale, costing \$25/m<sup>3</sup>, compared to commercial rates of \$70-\$80 per m<sup>3</sup>.

### **Soil advocacy**

Australia is not known for its fertile and deep soils. Any meaningful conception of 'sustainability' in the Australian context must be based around building levels of soil fertility. Thankfully, with the appointment of the Hon Major General Sir Michael Jeffery as Australia's first Soil Advocate in November 2012, the Federal Government appears to have recognised this reality.<sup>63</sup> Measuring the achievement of this goal requires an increase in the numbers of polycultural / combined crops and livestock farms; and of farms which keep some land exclusively for nature conservation.



**The People's Food Plan**

What happens in the food system is of no concern to you if you're never going to eat again. But if you're intending to have breakfast, lunch or dinner, what happens to [family] farmers, what happens to seeds, what happens to water, matters to you, because your lunch depends on it.  
Nettle Wiebe, farmer, founding member of La Via Campesina

**The People's Food Plan** is a national discussion for all Australians to share ideas for a sustainable food system.

**Join us to share your experiences, thoughts and ideas.**

**1.30-3.00pm, Thursday 1 November**  
Civic Area, Onkaparinga Council Office, Ramsay Place, Noarlunga Centre

**12.30-3.30pm, Sunday 11 November**  
South West Community Centre, 171 Sturt Street, Adelaide

**For more information**, email [harmonic.designs@yahoo.com](mailto:harmonic.designs@yahoo.com), or visit <http://australian.foodsovereigntyalliance.org>

Creating equitable, sustainable and resilient food systems for all Australians

Friends of the Earth

*People's Food Plan Forums in Adelaide*

60 From the Groundswell Final Agronomy Report, March 2011, available at: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/54768220/Groundswell-Final-Agronomy-Report#>.

61 Ibid. The stakeholders were: Wiradjuri Condobolin Corporation, the Palerang Agricultural Society, Bettergrow, Zero Waste Australia, and the South-East office of the NSW DECC Sustainability Programs Division. The sites were 'a cropping trial east of Bungendore, one north of Goulburn, and another at Condobolin Ag Research Station', as well as two grazing trials east and west of Goulburn.

62 <http://armidalecitytosoil.blogspot.com.au/>.

63 Neales, S., 2012, "Ex G-G is the first Advocate for Soils", *The Australian*, 24.10.12, available at: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/politics-news/ex-g-g-is-the-first-advocate-for-soils/story-fn59nqld-1226501871644>. Sir Michael Jeffery is the Chairman of Soils for Life, a program of the environmental non-governmental organisation Outcomes Australia, which supports innovative farmers and land-managers who demonstrate 'high performance in regenerative landscape management': <http://www.soilsforlife.org.au/about.html>.

## What We Can Do

*More research! These are complex issues, we need to be able to develop complex responses*

(PFP participant, Noarlunga forum, SA)

	<b>Ways Forward: What People Want</b>	<b>How to achieve this (some suggestions)</b>
1	Raise levels of farm viability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tackle systemic debt traps for farmers</li> <li>• Develop new markets, improve market access and create incentives that increase farm income, narrow the distance to eaters and support sustainable practices and land stewardship</li> </ul>
2	Reverse the exodus from farming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentor, encourage and support young farmers</li> <li>• Pilot a variety of land tenure arrangements to give young people access to farmland, including landshare (<a href="http://www.landshareaustralia.com.au/">http://www.landshareaustralia.com.au/</a>) and farmshare (<a href="http://www.organicfarmshare.com/">http://www.organicfarmshare.com/</a>) arrangements and land trusts</li> </ul>
3	Research, development and extension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fund research to implement agro-ecology and similar resilient and productive agricultural systems</li> <li>• Measure the output from systems using agro-ecology to maintain and disseminate and evidence base</li> <li>• Make available more agronomists for farmers and encourage a collaborative relationship</li> </ul>
4	Urban farms for every town and city	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lobby your State MP and Councillors to revise planning laws and other restrictions on urban food production</li> <li>• A national education program to promote and support urban food production</li> <li>• Lobby your Councillors to employ an urban agriculture specialist to facilitate urban food production. Follow the example of the City of Yarra in Melbourne.</li> </ul>
5	Agro-ecology - a system that values farmers, animals and the land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support farmers adopting better farm practices, lower inputs and caring for soil (tax incentives, rates discounts, specialist agronomists)</li> <li>• Develop and implement measures and reporting on the achievements of agro-ecological-type systems</li> <li>• Permaculture (a design system) and agro-ecological farming methods (the rural expression of permaculture) should be a core subject at agricultural colleges.</li> </ul>
6	Apply Precautionary Principle for new technologies like GMOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lobby your Federal MP for detailed, independent research into the health, environmental and economic effects of technologies like GM, nanotech and irradiation</li> <li>• Ask your supermarket or food supplier for full details of their use of technologies like GM, irradiation and nanotechnology</li> <li>• Join organisations such as MADGE (<a href="http://www.madge.org.au/">http://www.madge.org.au/</a>), Gene Ethics (<a href="http://www.geneethics.org/">http://www.geneethics.org/</a>) and Friends of the Earth (<a href="http://www.foe.org.au">www.foe.org.au</a>) to engage in campaigns</li> </ul>



# CHAPTER FIVE: PLANNING FOR FAIR FOOD SYSTEMS

*Every additional enterprise we would like to add to our farm brings with it another layer of paperwork and compliance cost. Fruit and veg are the only part not affected. If you want cattle, laying hens, pigs, dairy, or heaven forbid do your own processing, each incurs another layer of paperwork and cost. Incidentally the total cost for a small operation is essentially the same as for a large corporate, which makes it very difficult for small operators to compete. [This is one of the] biggest obstacles to beginner farmers and existing famers diversifying to farm in a more ecologically friendly manner and hence more effectively addressing local food demand.*

(Written submission, Organic Farmer, South East Queensland)

## Challenges

Planning is at the heart of sustainable and resilient food systems. Yet there are very few planning frameworks in Australia that directly integrate food, health and well-being. The devaluation of food and farming is apparent in many ways, from the increasing corporate control of the food system from seedling to supermarket, to current land use conflicts over food vs fuel and urban sprawl vs urban consolidation/infill. The controversy over coal-seam gas mining has raged for more than two years across rural communities in northern New South Wales and southern Queensland. Meanwhile, much of the country's best farmland is being buried under concrete, as the urban footprint continues to expand into prime agricultural land.

Conscious adoption of strategic spatial planning frameworks is essential to safeguard the vital and irreplaceable resources that guarantee our current and future food security.<sup>64</sup> In the cities, food-sensitive planning and urban design principles can guard against the proliferation of 'food deserts'. These are areas where fast-food and liquor outlets greatly outnumber fresh food retailers, and they are becoming a feature of Australian towns and cities. There is strength in diversity, and that's what we should be planning for if we want resilient food systems, capable of meeting the challenges of the future.

## Ways Forward: What People Want

On the issue of integrated planning, many solutions were identified in the forums:

### **1. Protect arable land**

Some of Australia's most fertile soils, with secure access to long-term water supplies, are located on the fringes of our major cities. That's a major reason why the cities are located where they are. Yet suburban sprawl has swallowed much of this farmland, and a lot of what remains is under constant threat through further urban growth. This prime peri-urban farmland must be seen as a vital resource, well beyond any short-term financial profit that can be realised through its sale as real estate. Similarly, good arable land, wherever it is, should be protected from coal-seam gas and other forms of mining. It is important to

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<sup>64</sup> Strategic spatial planning 'is the application of the generic strategic planning process to the planning of geographic space, or territory: cities, city-regions, and regions. [It is] a public-sector led socio-spatial process through which a vision, actions and means for implementation are produced that shape and frame what a place is and may become': Sposito, V., Faggian, R., Turner, D., Brassington, L., Romejin, H., and Rees, D., 2012, "Strategic Planning for Climate Change and Regional Development in Victoria, Australia." Paper presented at the Planning Institute of Australia 2012 National Congress, 29 April – 2 May 2012, Adelaide, South Australia.

## The Key Messages from the Forums

Integrate food system thinking into planning frameworks, policies and implementation

Map prime agricultural land, and protect it from mining and urban sprawl

State Government and Council culture and policy must enable and encourage urban agriculture and community food initiatives

identify, protect and utilise this arable land using the regulatory powers of government.

There was strong support in the forums to make food systems a priority in planning and policy thinking. *Regional development strategies* should integrate and prioritise agriculture, alongside housing and industry. At the same time, there should be a *bio-regional approach* to food and land planning. To protect existing peri-urban and other farmland, participants urged an immediate moratorium on the sale of prime agricultural land. An immediate moratorium on the expansion of coal-seam gas drilling on farmland was likewise urged. Participants also spoke of a need to *experiment with new sites of urban expansion targeted towards non-arable lands*, and support such pilots with research funds to document the results. In many forums the *Food-Sensitive Planning and Urban Design toolkit* was recommended as being a foundation for integrated food planning frameworks and legislation. This is explored in more detail below under *Inspiring Models*.

### 2. Grow more food in towns and cities

There was also strong support across the forums for a much greater emphasis on the role that urban agriculture can play, and is playing, in building fair and resilient food systems for Australia. Participants spoke of a ‘diversified urban ecology in the cities’, and how ‘vacant land should be prioritised for food production’; of the need to ‘cut the red tape’ when it comes to community food initiatives; and of the need to ‘integrate food growing into new public housing and high density developments’.

When asked to put specific *targets* to these actions, one group identified the following milestones:

- Within five years, increase by 25% the number of households [in any given community] growing / raising their own food
- All residents to have access to free non-hybrid seeds paid for through their rates
- Set a percentage of land with adequate sun access in new private dwellings to be reserved for food production
- Every urban area has at least 1m<sup>2</sup> of productive food space per person

### Inspiring Models

Many outstanding examples were mentioned in the forums. We have supported these with our own research.

#### *Farmland Trusts in the US, UK and Canada*

Farmland and community land trusts can be used to preserve agricultural land into the future, preventing development for other purposes that might threaten community and national food security and local food sovereignty. A farmland trust is a ‘private, non-profit organisation that preserves farms’ and arable land.<sup>65</sup> Farmland trusts are registered legal entities, which may or may not have charitable status, depending on the jurisdiction in which they are incorporated. They also vary in scale, with some operating at local level, others regionally or nationally. Typically the ownership structure of smaller-scale farmland trusts provides for a wide degree of community participation.

There are many well-developed and successful models of such trusts in North America and the United Kingdom, which provide examples for Australia, such as the Vancouver Agricultural Land Reserve<sup>66</sup> and

65 From A Review of Farmland Trusts: A Review of Farmland Trusts: Communities Supporting Farmland, Farming and Farmers, Land Conservancy of British Columbia, p7.

66 <http://www.alc.gov.bc.ca/>

the Fordhall Farm.<sup>67, 68</sup> A thorough review of farmland trusts operating in Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom was published in 2010 by the Land Conservancy of British Columbia<sup>69</sup> and Farm Folk City Folk<sup>70</sup>. The review concluded that farmland trusts:

- Permanently secure land for agricultural use and public benefit
- Work collaboratively and in partnership with several agencies and organisations
- Enjoy a high degree of public trust, and rely on financial and volunteer support from the public
- Can be part of a landowner's succession plan for protecting their land for future farming
- Promote opportunities for planned giving, are recipients of charitable donations of land and cash, and direct people to resources for estate planning
- Local and regional farmland trusts can be very effective in meeting community interests in a region or a specific local farm

The report recommended that:

- [State] governments 'should support and facilitate the creation of farmland trusts as non-profit, charitable organisations, [whose] primary role should be to promote, receive and manage funds, donations and bequests for agricultural purposes, and disburse them to state and regional land trusts and other non-profit community farm co-operatives and societies'
- 'Local governments should set aside money for farmland preservation, and partner public funds with regional farmland trust private donations to raise money for land acquisitions'

### **Farmland Mapping Project, Grafton, New South Wales**

Peri-urban farmland can be a dynamic source of regional economic development and food security for existing and future generations.<sup>71</sup> GIS overlays, accompanied by participatory mapping processes involving key stakeholders, can tell us the location of our best soils. Once prime farmland is identified, it must be protected. An essential first step is to integrate an holistic conception, and prioritisation, of the multiple values of agriculture and food, such as secure rural futures, biodiversity protection and localised food production, into State planning frameworks. Appropriate food and farming zones and overlays can be created, giving local governments the scope to incorporate these into their own Municipal Strategic Statements and Municipal Public Health Statements.

A recent Australian example of a participatory farmland mapping exercise is the NSW mid-north coast

67 <http://www.fordhallfarm.com/index.php>

68 In 2010 the Land Conservancy of British Columbia published a review of farmland trusts in North America in order to describe, by reference to several case studies, the structure and operation of differing farmland trust models. The report, *A Review of Farmland Trusts: Communities Supporting Farmland, Farming and Farmers* is available for download at: <http://blog.conservancy.bc.ca/agriculture/publications-2/>.

69 <http://blog.conservancy.bc.ca/>

70 <http://www.farmfolkcityfolk.ca/community-farms-program/a-review-of-farmland-trusts/>

71 <http://www.casey.vic.gov.au/bunyipfoodbelt/>

## **COMMUNITY FARMLAND TRUSTS<sup>1</sup>**

A community farm land trust is a type of community land trust.<sup>2</sup> It is a democratically governed, member-based, non-profit organization created to acquire and hold farmland for community benefit. These trusts provide long-term leases for secure tenure of farmland and housing. Like other farmland trusts, they can use rental agreements to promote ecologically-sound farming methods. Examples of community farmland trusts include Fordhall Farm<sup>3</sup> in the United Kingdom, and South of the Sound<sup>4</sup> in Washington State, US.

Community Farm Land Trusts:

- provide a mechanism for the democratic ownership of farm land and associated assets by the community;
- ensure permanently affordable access to farms for farmers;
- retain farmland for farming, horticulture and related enterprises;
- allow community access and a range of benefits.<sup>5</sup>

1 Reproduced from *A Review of Farmland Trusts: A Review of Farmland Trusts: Communities Supporting Farmland, Farming and Farmers*, Land Conservancy of British Columbia, p8.

2 See Section 8, Resources. Institute for Community Economics. <http://www.iceclt.org/cltmodel.html>

3 <http://www.fordhallfarm.com/>

4 <http://communityfarmlandtrust.org/>

5 Stroud Common Wealth Ltd. *Community Farm Land Trusts: Final report*. 2007.

### Quotes from the Forums

*Have a strong policy to protect peri-urban and prime ag land in general* (PFP participant, Hobart)

*Arable lands hold higher value to communities than mining and resources extraction* (PFP participant, Newcastle)

*We need to change the culture within Councils, so that it is enabling rather than constraining* (PFP participant, Coffs Harbour)

*Lobby Councils for their People's Food Plan for food security* (PFP participant, Hobart)

*Water for food and for drinking should take priority over water for industries and unnecessary consumption* (PFP participant, Newcastle)

*Get Councils to promote rather than block grey water and black water systems* (PFP participant, Hobart)

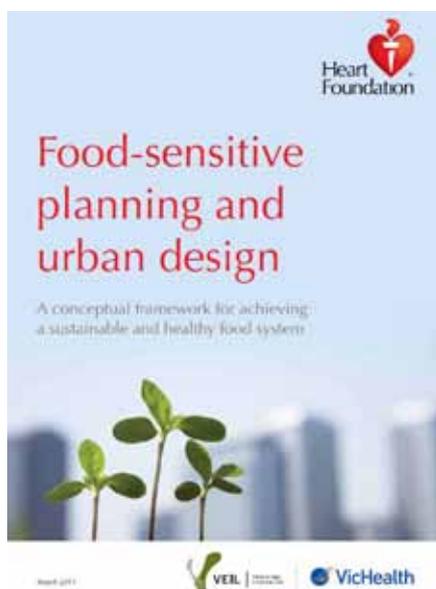
Farmland Mapping Project, initiated by the NSW Department of Planning in Grafton in 2006. The aim of the Project was to identify and map 'regionally significant farmland', with the assistance of expert soil surveyors, the use of previous soil landscape mapping, and the involvement of farmer reference groups comprised of individuals with detailed local knowledge of their particular localities.

Regionally significant farmland was defined as:

*[L]and capable of sustained use for agricultural production with a reasonable level of inputs and which has the potential to contribute substantially to the ongoing productivity and prosperity of a region.<sup>72</sup>*

The Report stated that the goal of protecting such farmland would have wider and long-lasting benefits for the whole region, including:

- Greater certainty for the production of fresh local produce
- Maintenance of agriculture as an important contributor to the regional economy
- Greater certainty for investment in agriculture and sustainable land management systems and
- Minimisation of farming / residential land use conflicts – farmers being able to operate their farms without the threat of unplanned encroachment



### ***Food Sensitive Urban Design in Victoria; and the Food Security Council, Tasmania***

Supported by VicHealth and the Heart Foundation, the Victorian Eco-Innovation Lab<sup>73</sup> (VEIL) and David Locke Associates published the *Food-Sensitive Planning and Urban Design* (FSPUD) resource toolkit in 2011.<sup>74</sup> FSPUD aims to help local and state government planners create multi-dimensional and multi-functional food systems that enhance human and environmental well-being. FSPUD sets out ten mutually-reinforcing principles to underpin the development of sustainable, resilient and fair food systems.

Some Councils, such as the City of Melbourne and the City of Maribyrnong, already have their own food and food security policies.<sup>75</sup> At the state level, the Tasmanian government has led the way with its Food Security Council supporting community and council actions.<sup>76</sup> To effect wider institutional change, the FSPUD principles need to be integrated into high-level Council strategic plans, and into State government planning legislation and policy frameworks. The Heart Foundation has already developed training and

72 NSW Departments of Planning; Environment and Climate Change; Primary Industries; and the Northern Rivers Catchment Management Authority, 2008, Mid-North Coast Farmland Mapping Project: Final Recommendations Report.

73 The Victorian Eco-Innovation Lab is 'a collaborative research group within the Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning at the University of Melbourne. VEIL seeks to identify and promote emerging technical and social innovations for future sustainable systems as a response to the critical challenge of our times: the urgent need for fundamental social, technical and structural change to bring about a low-carbon economy': <http://www.abp.unimelb.edu.au/research/veil>.

74 See <http://www.ecoinnovationlab.com/research/food-sensitive-planning-and-urban-design/417-food-sensitive-planning-and-urban-design-fspud-report-released>

75 See <http://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/CommunityServices/Health/FoodPolicy/Pages/FoodPolicy.aspx> and [http://www.maribyrnong.vic.gov.au/page/Page.aspx?Page\\_id=319](http://www.maribyrnong.vic.gov.au/page/Page.aspx?Page_id=319)

76 [http://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/siu/committees/tasmania\\_food\\_security\\_council](http://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/siu/committees/tasmania_food_security_council)

support programmes for planners from all local government departments. This work should be further supported, and extended into other States and Territories.

### **FSPUD PRINCIPLES<sup>1</sup>**

1. Support secure and equitable access to the Food necessary for a healthy and fulfilling life.
2. Make healthy and sustainable Food choices easy and convenient choices.
3. Encourage use of spaces and places to meet many diverse needs, reconciling Food production and exchange with housing, enjoyment of open spaces and recreational areas, urban cooling, skills and jobs, socialising and community celebration.
4. Provide opportunities for those who wish to participate in growing, exchanging, cooking and sharing Food.
5. Identify and invest in the safe use and re-use of urban resources (soil, water, nutrients, 'waste') that can support viable and sustainable Food production.
6. Protect and / or enhance urban and surrounding ecosystems and increase biodiversity (including, but not limited to, bees, open-pollinating fruit trees, native vegetation).
7. Ensure decisions reflect the long-term value and broader community benefits of access to productive land and experienced producers.
8. Encourage investment and innovation, through secure tenure and supportive operating environments for both community and commercial Food enterprises.
9. Increase resilience, by designing to keep options open for future use of space and resources.
10. Acknowledge and support diversity and sovereignty (the right to have informed choices) over what, how and where people produce and eat Food.

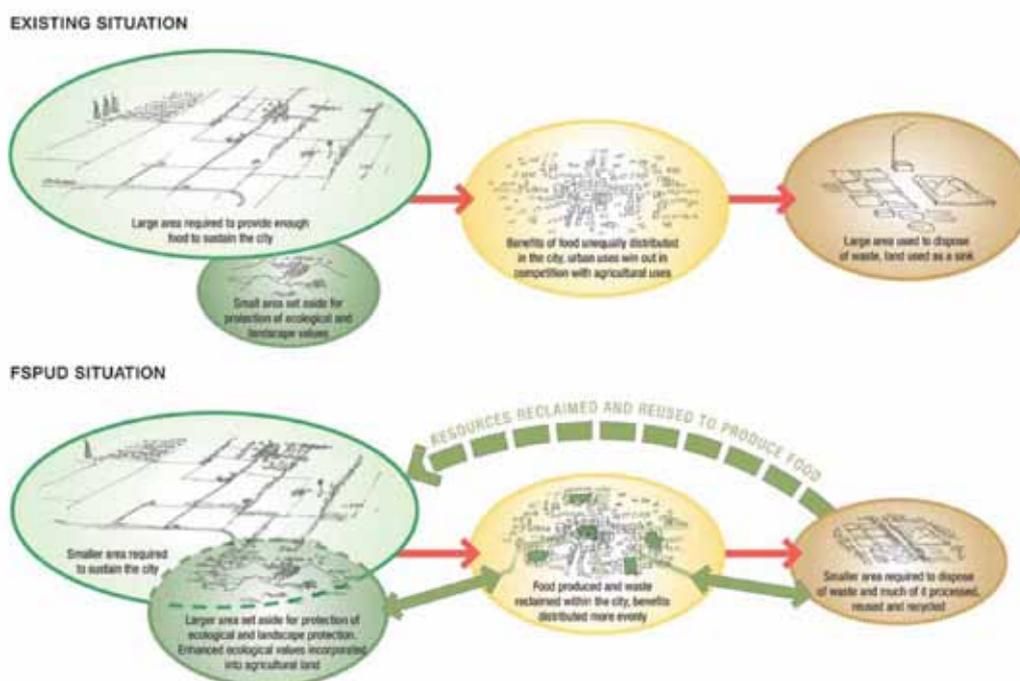
Note: In FSPUD, 'Food' [with a capital 'F'] is defined as an 'aspirational subset of food that is:

- Required for a healthy and nutritious diet, and is adequate, safe, culturally appropriate and tasty;
- Produced, processed, transported, marketed and sold without adverse environmental impact, and that contributes to healthy soils and waterways, clean air and biodiversity;
- Provided through means that are humane and just, with adequate attention to the needs of farmers and other workers, consumers and communities.'

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<sup>1</sup> Reproduced from *Food-sensitive planning and urban design: A conceptual framework for achieving a sustainable and healthy food system* (Heart Foundation), pp5, 12.





**A conceptual model of FSPUD** (reproduced from *Food-Sensitive Planning and Urban Design: A conceptual framework for achieving a sustainable and healthy food system* (Heart Foundation, 2011))

### **Hawkesbury Harvest, Sydney, New South Wales**

As a sprawling city, Sydney has experienced vast urban encroachment into food producing areas. The Hawkesbury area is one such example of a highly productive food producing area that is meeting the challenges of urban expansion. The Hawkesbury Harvest project promotes the area's peri-urban amenity values by showcasing its agricultural heritage and the fresh, seasonal produced on the city's fringes. There are four main components to the Hawkesbury Harvest program, these are:

- A farm gate trail
- Special events
- Farmers and 'fine food' markets
- Industry development and regional branding

The website <http://hawkesburyharvest.com.au/> highlights the diversity of products available in the area, as well as promoting agro-tourism— including farm stays, slow food restaurants and farm tours. The program has been so successful it has won a number of awards, whilst also promoting the high social, economic, ecological and agricultural values of the region.

### **Urban Agriculture and Community Food Initiatives, Australia**

Many Australians already participate in some form of urban agriculture and food production, beginning in our backyards, and from there to helping plant edible streetscapes and community fruit groves, and volunteering in community gardens.<sup>77</sup> Anyone who's participated in these activities knows they are fruitful in the learning of new skills, meeting new people and improving physical and mental health. In addition, people are brought together, and communities are strengthened and become more resilient to food price fluctuations, and climate change. Urban food growing can make a substantial contribution to meeting individual and family requirements for fresh fruit and veg, as Angelo Eliades in Preston has shown<sup>78</sup>.

<sup>77</sup> A national attitudes and behaviours survey carried out for AFSA by the Australia Institute in June 2012 found that 53% of Australians are growing and / or raising some of their own food: <http://www.australianfoodsovereigntyalliance.org/2012/07/02/australia-needs-a-food-literacy-campaign/>. Of that number, three-fifths had begun doing so in the last five years, and 19% in the last 12 months.

<sup>78</sup> See <http://deepgreenpermaculture.com/my-garden/>



Angelo Eliades in his permaculture food forest garden, Preston, Melbourne.

Given the health, social and community benefits of urban food production, there is every reason for governments at every level to get behind this growing trend. Many forum participants urged their local Councils to support urban agriculture and community food growing. Happily, Councils everywhere can now look to the City of Yarra (as mentioned earlier), which in 2011 adopted a series of ground-breaking guidelines for urban agriculture, covering community gardens, nature strip and garden beds, productive trees, and planter boxes<sup>79</sup>. Yarra Council has also supported this process through the employment of a dedicated urban agriculture officer, whose role is to advise and support community groups wishing to begin an urban food initiative.

## What We Can Do

	<b>Ways Forward: What People Want</b>	<b>How to achieve this (some suggestions)</b>
1	Protect arable land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Place a moratorium on coal-seam gas and other forms of mining on prime agricultural land</li> <li>• Place a moratorium on the sale of prime agricultural land, especially for development into suburban sprawl</li> <li>• Map arable land and regulate for its utilisation and protect</li> <li>• Support community landtrusts, agricultural land trusts and farmland trusts</li> <li>• Plan to get more farmers returning to the land, or young farmers taking up farming (see Chapter Three)</li> </ul>
2	Grow more food in towns and cities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Councils should adopt and implement the Heart Foundation's Food Sensitive Planning and Urban Design (FSPUD) principles</li> <li>• Councils should adopt urban agriculture policies and support new and existing activities</li> <li>• Following the example of Yarra City Council, employ urban agriculture facilitators</li> <li>• Grants and support for local start-up schemes</li> <li>• Relaxation of 'red tape' hindering food production and exchange</li> </ul>

79 <http://www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/Environment/Community-gardens/>



# CHAPTER SIX: BUILDING FAIR FOOD SYSTEMS

## Challenges

The long-term goal of food sovereignty is to democratise food systems. That means all participants in these systems, from producers to eaters and everyone in between, having a more equal say in how the system operates; and a right to participate in how key decisions are made. Reaching this goal will be a massive challenge, since where we are today is very far from a food democracy. It's more like a 'food oligarchy' – a system run by a small number of powerful players primarily for their own benefit, with the support and encouragement of political leaders. Author and activist Raj Patel uses the metaphor of an hourglass to describe the globalised food system, with a large number of farmers at the top, and a huge number of eaters at the bottom, but most of the value in the system being squeezed and siphoned off by a tiny number of corporate actors in the middle.<sup>80</sup>

Corporate control of food and farming was a major talking point in many PFP forums. The supermarket duopoly exercised in Australia by Coles and Woolworths is the most prominent example that resonates strongly with people's day-to-day experience. As reported by the ABC's 'Hungry Beast' program in 2010, 23 cents of *every Australian retail dollar*, i.e.. not just food and groceries, is spent in one of these two businesses.<sup>81</sup> Their extensive interests go well beyond food to encompass fertilisers; hardware; variety and electronics stores; liquor, pubs clubs and poker machines; service stations; financial services such as credit cards; and coal mines.

Recent estimates by Master Grocers Australia (*see below*) put the combined market share of the supermarket duopoly in food and groceries in excess of 80%, compared to around 34% in 1975.<sup>82</sup> Australia has by far the most concentrated supermarket sector in the developed world. Today, far from the rhetoric of 'free' and 'competitive' markets, the food economy is governed by an oligopoly of private interests.<sup>83</sup> Cargill, the world's largest grain trader, recently became Australia's largest grain trader when it purchased the privatised Australian Wheat Board. Archer Daniels Midlands, the second largest grain trader by revenues, is trying to take over GrainCorp, which operates a monopoly on grain trading on Australia's east coast.<sup>84</sup> Since deregulation of the dairy industry, the multinational food and beverage company, Kirin, now controls around 80% of Australia's drinking milk market, forcing out farmer-run cooperatives like Dairy Farmers.<sup>85</sup> Two companies, Weston Foods and Goodman Fielder, control more than half of the flour milling, bread and bakery markets.<sup>86</sup>

Private control of agriculture, food processing and retailing means that decisions about what food is produced, how it is processed and where it is sold are driven by the imperatives of profit and shareholder

80 Patel, R., 2007, "Stuffed and Starved: Markets, Power, and the Hidden Battle for the Global Food System". Black Inc., Melbourne.

81 [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M1et\\_HBmLYw&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M1et_HBmLYw&feature=player_embedded).

82 Carr, K. "Trend to private-label groceries is no bargain for manufacturers" Sydney Morning Herald, 28 November 2011 <http://www.smh.com.au/opinion/politics/trend-to-privatelabel-groceries-is-no-bargain-for-manufacturers-20111127-1o1ie.html> [accessed 6 July 2012]

83 An 'oligopoly' situation exists when four companies control between them 40% or more of a particular market.

84 <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-10-22/graincorp-receives-us-takeover-offer/4326556>

85 Durie, J. "Big supermarkets gain fresh food market share at the expense of the small guys" The Australian, 9 March 2011 <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/opinion/big-supermarkets-gain-fresh-food-market-share-at-the-expense-of-the-small-guys/story-e6frg9if-1226018006708>

86 "Foreign takeovers continue" The Weekly Times, 7 March 2012 [http://www.weeklytimesnow.com.au/article/2012/03/07/452681\\_business-news.html](http://www.weeklytimesnow.com.au/article/2012/03/07/452681_business-news.html) [accessed 6 July 2012]

gain, and not by human and environmental needs. Moreover, the huge market share controlled by the small number of companies that dominate Australia's food system makes for extensive anti-competitive conduct, as discussed below.

### ***The impacts of excessive market concentration***

Farmers feel the impact of this market power keenly. As suppliers to companies like Kirin in the milk market, farmers are forced to accept lower and lower prices in order to win supply contracts. In the milk sector, farmers have seen dropping farm gate prices since deregulation in the early 2000s.<sup>87</sup> Dairy farmers are experiencing even greater downward pressure since the start of the so-called 'Milk Wars' between Coles and Woolworths in early 2011 to push retail prices to \$1 per litre.<sup>88</sup>

In August 2012 the Master Grocers Australia and Liquor Retailers Australia, which represent independently-owned food and liquor retailing businesses around Australia (such as IGA / Metcash, Foodland, Foodworks, Cellarbrations and Bottlemart) published a report on the need for fair competition in food and liquor retailing in Australia.<sup>89</sup> In this report, and in the online petition campaign launched shortly afterwards, they draw attention to the anti-competitive practices of the supermarket duopoly, and the impacts of those practices:

*This report reveals a number of anti-competitive policies and practices that depend on enormous market power, including: anti-competitive price discrimination, shopper docket schemes, 'store saturation' strategies and over-sized store strategies. These practices assist the growth of the dominant players by unfairly handicapping smaller independent competitors.*

*For example, the major chains have a strategy in which they develop over-large supermarkets in small local markets, even where there is little or no population growth projected. This has the effect of preventing future market entrants and it destroys existing smaller competitors (and many small and medium specialty retailers who are not direct competitors). Such anti-competitive strategies are possible only for the major chains because they require cross-subsidies over an extended period to sustain the over-sized store.*

*The situation is exacerbated by local government approvals of such over-sized store developments, with insufficient regard for their impact on the viability of existing businesses, community amenity or commercial property values.<sup>90</sup>*

It is not only farmers who suffer as a result of the enormous economic power of companies like Coles and Woolworths. A survey of hundreds of truck drivers in 2012 found that the majority felt pressure to drive above the speed limit in order to meet the companies' demands.<sup>91</sup> Drivers were also forced to work for hundreds of unpaid hours per year, waiting in delivery lines, loading and unloading cargo, as supermarkets use trucking companies as mobile warehouses. Health and safety standards drop and workers' lives are threatened when Coles and Woolworths refuse to allow sufficient time for vehicle repairs. Suppliers other than farmers, such as food manufacturers, also feel the impacts of the supermarket duopoly's power. While complaints have risen, there is a widespread belief that this is merely the tip of the iceberg, as many suppliers fear retaliation in the form of loss of contracts if they lodge a complaint.<sup>92</sup>

The supposed justification for the expansion of the supermarket duopoly is that food shoppers get a good deal at the checkout. But again, the evidence contradicts this, with comparative studies showing that Australian shoppers have experienced higher food price inflation in the past decade than every other OECD country, apart from South Korea.<sup>93</sup>

87 Senate inquiry into pricing and competition in the dairy industry [http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate\\_Committees?url=economics\\_ctte/dairy\\_industry\\_09/report/c03.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=economics_ctte/dairy_industry_09/report/c03.htm)

88 "QLD dairy farmers count costs of the milk wars" 26 January 2012 <http://nqr.farmonline.com.au/news/state/dairy/general/qld-dairyfarmers-count-cost-of-milk-wars/2432796.aspx?storypage=0>

89 Let's Have Fair Competition! The risk of losing retail diversity, choice and true competition in Australia's supermarket industry, Master Grocers Australia, available at: [http://www.mga.asn.au/index.php/download\\_file/view/1294/1/](http://www.mga.asn.au/index.php/download_file/view/1294/1/).

90 Ibid., p7.

91 <http://www.twu.com.au/home/media/major-survey-of-truckies-a-damning-indictment-of-c/>

92 Let's Have Fair Competition! Op cit., p9.

93 <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2009-11-09/inflation-also-to-blame-for-food-price-hike/1135248>

Another impact of all of this is that the viability of town centres, which are the life-blood of many communities, particularly in rural and regional Australia, is being severely compromised:

*Town centres are not only business and employment centres, they are the social hearts of local communities. Traditional main street retailing provides a reason for people to gather, a place to meet and socialise, and a chance to connect and maintain a sense of community. This is particularly so in small to medium size towns where alternative gathering places may be some distance away.*<sup>94</sup>

Just as favourable government policy and legislation has allowed the globalised and industrialised food system to flourish and expand, so policy and legislation can also make a real difference to local and community food systems. Getting from food oligarchy to food democracy requires a 'double-movement' that is, challenging and resisting the corporate dominance of the food system, and setting up viable alternatives. With this 'double-movement' in mind, we now examine the emerging food 'social enterprise' sector.

### ***Benefits of food social enterprises, and community food systems***<sup>95</sup>

The multiple benefits of local, regional and community food systems are becoming better understood. These benefits embody the principles and aspirations of food sovereignty:

- Encouraging the greater consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables, thereby improving health and well-being and lessening the burden of dietary-related diseases
- Successfully targeting marginalised and vulnerable groups, over-coming the phenomenon of 'food deserts' and reducing levels of food insecurity
- Stimulating local and regional economic development, creating local businesses and jobs, and broadening the revenue base for local and state governments
- Reducing the fossil-fuel footprint of food systems through encouragement of knowledge- and labour-intensive, rather than input-intensive, forms of agriculture and food production
- Enhancing biodiversity, and rural / urban amenity, through diverse production methods, the preservation of significant agricultural land, and the greening of urban spaces
- Increasing food system resilience, through shortened supply and value chains
- Building social capital by educational and job training opportunities
- Tackling the demographic crisis facing farmers and rural communities, by making food growing and production seen as desirable and financially rewarding, and thus an attractive livelihood option for young people
- Creating stronger, more vibrant, connected and healthier communities through good food

These enterprises, and the food systems of which they form part, offer many positive pathways to address the many and serious problems of the globalised industrial food system. Participants in all forums

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94 Goodman, R., 2012, Foreword to Let's Have Fair Competition! The risk of losing retail diversity, choice and true competition in Australia's supermarket industry, Master Grocers Australia, available at: [http://www.mga.asn.au/index.php/download\\_file/view/1294/1/](http://www.mga.asn.au/index.php/download_file/view/1294/1/).

95 These and other benefits are discussed in a recent evaluation of 307 community food projects financed by the US Department of Agriculture from 2005-2009 under the 1996 Community Food Security Act (Kobayashi, M. and Tyson, L, "The Activities and Impacts of Community Food Projects 2005-2009". USDA); and also in a 2011 evaluation carried out by the Union of Concerned Scientists on the economic and other impacts of farmers' markets and other elements of local and regional food systems: O'Hara, J.K., 2011, "Market Forces: Creating Jobs through Public Investment in Local and Regional Food Systems". UCS. These two reports are attached as appendices. Further confirmation of the economic benefits in particular is provided by modelling undertaken to determine the economic impacts of an increase in effective demand of 25% for locally-sourced produce in North-East Ohio: Masi, B., L. Schaller, and M. Shuman, 2010. The 25% shift: The Benefits of Food Localization for Northeast Ohio and How to Realize them. Available at: <http://www.neofoodweb.org/home>.

endorsed them as a positive solution to the problems of the current food system.

In the United States, the Department of Agriculture estimates that more than 136,000 US farms are selling food directly to eaters, with a monetary value of \$US1.2 billion in 2007.<sup>96</sup> In his survey of the literature for the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS), Jeffery O'Hara notes that 'further expansion of local and regional food systems has the potential to create tens of thousands of additional jobs'.<sup>97</sup> In particular, relatively small amounts of public investment in '100 to 500 otherwise-unsuccessful farmers' markets' – for example to pay for a market manager, install an EFTPOS machine, and carry out marketing and outreach activities – 'could create as many as 13,500 jobs over a five-year period'.<sup>98</sup>

The UCS makes the following recommendations to strengthen local and regional food economies in the US, many of which are highly relevant to Australia:

- **Increased federal and state funding for local and regional food systems**, specifically: a) rural development programs 'for investing in infrastructure to support local and regional food systems', b) support for local food system administrators such as farmers' market managers, and c) financial support for low-income communities to purchase healthy food at local food markets
- **Increased research on impacts of local and regional food systems**, specifically: a) data on marketing channels for local and regional food sales, b) how local food channels influence eater behaviour, c) effects of financial assistance for low-income groups to purchase healthy food at farmers' markets, d) feasibility studies on scaleability of local and regional food systems, including implications for land-use of expansion of such systems
- **Restructure farm safety nets for local food producers**, e.g. offer whole-of-farm insurance rather than just single-crop insurance; establish credit and financing mechanisms to support farmers selling through local food systems to expand and diversify their businesses
- **Build capacity in local governments and community organisations**, in order to be able to undertake the coordination work necessary to establish local and regional food systems; provide assistance to groups to develop business plans and identify funding opportunities
- **Support the expansion of certification standards in farmers' markets**<sup>99</sup>

In December 2012 a report commissioned for the 'Making Local Food Work' collaboration, funded by a 'Big Lottery Fund grant' of £10 million (\$AUD17.5 million approximately) over five years (2007-2012), revealed that the community food sector in the UK had a total economic value of £150 million (\$262.5 million).<sup>100</sup> A further example of the investment being made in local food initiatives in the UK is the £59.8 million Big Lottery grant awarded to 'Local food', for disbursement to community food projects around the country.<sup>101</sup> Nothing remotely similar to these grant programs exists in Australia.



96 O'Hara, 2011, "Market Forces", op cit., 2.

97 Ibid., 3.

98 Ibid.

99 Ibid., 4-5.

100 <http://www.makinglocalfoodwork.co.uk/news/news.cfm/newsid/234>.

101 <http://www.localfoodgrants.org/about>.

## Ways Forward: What People Want

*The story of Mondragon is an inspiration. Originally it was a community food initiative, which has become a global economic success. Community-run doesn't have to mean not-for-profit or struggling enterprise*

(PFP participant, Bendigo forum)

The case for meaningful change, in the form of effective regulations that re-balance food systems in the direction of the common good, is so strong that it can't be ignored any longer. That is the key message being delivered by participants in the PFP forums:

### **1. Tackle the corporate control of the food system**

*We are already building the new, fair and resilient food system: in our communities, in our businesses, on our farms. Address the gross unfairness of the current system that has allowed corporate power to become so concentrated, that is a minimum. Level the playing field. And support those of us building the fair food system, because it's the right thing to do – for farmers, for local businesses, for communities, for our health, and for the environment (PFP participant, Sydney)*

There is clearly a need to tackle excesses and abuses of corporate power where they exist. This requires an engaged citizenry to build momentum for change; and to create the political will and courage to regulate appropriately. The campaign to regulate the tobacco industry is the obvious precedent.

Education was also cited as being essential for change. Forum participants wanted to share and disseminate information about corporate power in the food system, through exploring questions like:

- Which corporations control the food system?
- What impact do their practices have on prices / farmers/ workers/ diversity/ system resilience / farming practices / environment ?

Participants in PFP forums also mentioned companies such as Monsanto, and commented that excessive corporate power is exercised at many points throughout the food supply chain. Many participants said that challenging this power should be a key priority of the PFP.

### **2. Increase support for local and regional food economies**

While corporate power is being tackled directly, the various elements of local and regional food economies must be supported. The overarching, strategic goal, is to make local food an easier choice, because a great competitive advantage of the supermarket duopoly is convenience. With that in mind, participants identified as a target the establishment of greater numbers of diverse organisations, institutions and enterprises in agrifood systems, including:

- More diverse farming
- More young farmers, and pathways for young and new farmers
- More small, independent stores/grocers
- More farmers' markets – and specifically more permanent farmers' markets
- More food cooperatives and food box/CSA schemes
- Establish online regional buying schemes

A specific target was mentioned in one forum, which was echoed in the strong endorsement of more localised food systems in many other places:

- *Within five years, double the % of locally sourced and made food in local businesses*

Within the broad goal to prioritise and incentivise small-scale and community food production, economies and systems, some specific targets were identified:

- *Within five years, increase by 25% the % of households growing / raising their own food*
- *Within five years, increase by 25% the number of community gardens around the country*
- *By 2020, every school to have a veggie garden*
- *Within five years, increase by 100% the number of edible streetscapes around the country*
- *By 2020, an organic buyers group / food co-op attached to every public school*

These targets, if achieved, would begin to have a transformative effect on Australia's food systems, not just in the external appearance of homes, streets and landscapes, but perhaps more importantly, in our relationship to food and our knowledge about it.

## The Key Messages from the Forums

Challenge exercise of excessive corporate power in the food production, distribution and retail systems, especially the retail duopoly of Coles and Woolworths

Localise food production, distribution and retailing as much as possible

Government funding and other support for locally-owned & controlled food production and distribution systems including food cooperatives, farmers' markets, Community-Supported Agriculture and other alternatives to the existing corporate-controlled system

Democratise food and farming systems; the economic power exercised by a handful of corporations means that people do not have a meaningful voice

## Inspiring Models

*There are no food co-ops where I live. It would be great if there was a place like Alfalfa House [food co-op in Sydney] near my place.*

(PFP participant, Sydney)

We are witnessing a renaissance in new food value systems and economies – ranging from farmers' markets and community-supported agriculture to whole towns turning to culinary tourism through supporting local cafes, farm and wine product outlets, heritage trails, and local branding. As well as enhancing the livelihoods for local producers, this growth in local and regional food systems can be a powerful engine of sustainable economic development, since a dollar spent in a local business circulates many more times than one spent in a non-local business.<sup>102</sup>

## Farmers' Markets

The Australian Farmers' Markets Association<sup>103</sup> (AFMA) defines a farmers' market as:

*A predominantly fresh food market that operates regularly within a community, at a local public location that provides a suitable environment for farmers and food producers to sell farm-origin and associated value-added processed food products directly to customers.*<sup>104</sup>

Farmers' markets have grown rapidly across Australia. The first was established in 1999, today (2013) there are over 150.<sup>105</sup> In the United States, growth in farmers' markets is even more impressive, rising from 340 in 1970, to over 7000 by 2010.<sup>106</sup> The AFMA identifies the following benefits of farmers' markets:

- Preservation of urban fringe farmland

<sup>102</sup> <http://lioninvesting.com/2011/02/the-multiplier-effect-of-local-investing/>

<sup>103</sup> <http://www.farmersmarkets.org.au/>

<sup>104</sup> Australian Farmers Markets Association, 2011, "Creating Appetite for Farmers' Markets in Australia: National Food Plan Submission."

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> O'Hara, J.K., 2011, "Market Forces: Creating Jobs Through Public Investment in Local and Regional Food Systems", Union of Concerned Scientists, available at: [http://www.ucsusa.org/food\\_and\\_agriculture/solutions/expand-healthy-food-access/market-forces.html](http://www.ucsusa.org/food_and_agriculture/solutions/expand-healthy-food-access/market-forces.html).

## Quotes from the Forums

*The country is big, the infrastructure is there, farming is geared up to that 'big ag' system. However, there's a definite need for viable local systems. There's a huge potential for something very different, that can feed us. We should be asking Federal and State governments to enable local communities to go ahead and build these systems* (PFP forum participant, Bellingen, New South Wales)

*Promote Farmers Markets – make space available for them, keep them open, free from controlling interests. Limit / cut red tape for them, prioritise locating them in areas with poor access to fresh food* (Hobart PFP forum)

*The coordination function of the local wholesaler [Food Hub] is so important. It needs to encourage local farmers to grow to fill the local demand"* (Former small farmer, Bellingen PFP forum)

*We have a lot of local community food initiatives happening and we just need to get on with it. There are opportunities to build on what is happening with better use of local infrastructure and surplus produce going to local food hubs* (PFP forum, Bendigo, Victoria)

- Enhancement of regional identity

- Contribution to economic development – a 2010 survey by the Victorian Farmers' Markets Association suggested that the average weekly spend at farmers markets in the state was \$2 million<sup>107</sup>

- Contribution to the tourism sector – visitors are willing to travel up to 40 km to reach farmers' markets

- Education about healthy eating habits and promotion of better nutrition

Importantly, the AFMA notes that 'the facilitation role of state and local government has been a significant driver in the growth of farmers' markets, particularly in Victoria and New South Wales.'<sup>108</sup> Their vision of thriving local food economies, centred around farmers' markets, is expansive and appealing (*see box on following page*); and one that resonates with participants in People's Food Plan forums.

### **Melbourne Community Farmers' Markets<sup>109</sup>**

This group of six markets are amongst the most authentic embodiment of the ideal of farmers' markets in Australia, in that the only stallholders permitted are the farmers and growers themselves; no re-sellers of food purchased at wholesale markets is permitted. All produce is either certified organic or chemical-free. No GM products are permitted, and the markets seek to minimise waste by

being plastic-bag free.<sup>110</sup> The markets are co-ordinated by retired chef and caterer Miranda Sharp, who now writes for the Age newspaper's Epicure section. Miranda is also a founding member of the Victorian Farmers' markets Association, and has played a leading role in securing the accreditation process of a number of Victorian farmers' markets in 2010, giving patrons confidence in their authenticity.<sup>111</sup>

### **Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA)**

In its original or traditional form, a CSA is:

*[A]n arrangement whereby [an eater] purchases a 'share' of on-farm produce from a farmer early in the year and receives a weekly delivery of fresh produce throughout the growing season...The benefits to farmers are that they receive payment for their products earlier in the calendar year before harvest, they can mitigate the effects of price or production risks that could occur during the growing season, and by having completed their marketing before growing season they can focus exclusively on production.*<sup>112</sup>

Like farmers' markets, CSAs have expanded very rapidly in the United States in recent years, with one directory suggesting that there may now be over 4000 operating, with over 12,500 farms participating.<sup>113</sup> In the UK, a 2007 National Lottery grant enabled the Soil Association and its partners in the 'Making Local Food Work' collaboration to support the establishment of 26 new CSAs, expanding the sector to 35, with over 100 new CSAs planned.<sup>114</sup>

107 [http://www.weeklytimesnow.com.au/article/2011/03/18/306641\\_field-days.html](http://www.weeklytimesnow.com.au/article/2011/03/18/306641_field-days.html).

108 "Creating Appetite for Farmers' Markets in Australia", *op cit*.

109 [www.mfm.com.au](http://www.mfm.com.au)

110 <http://www.mfm.com.au/content/about>.

111 <http://thinkfeast.wordpress.com/tag/miranda-sharp/>.

112 O'Hara *op cit*, 10.

113 <http://www.localharvest.org/csa/>.

114 <http://www.transitionnetwork.org/projects/community-supported-agriculture>.

### **Purple Pear Farm, Maitland, NSW, Australia**

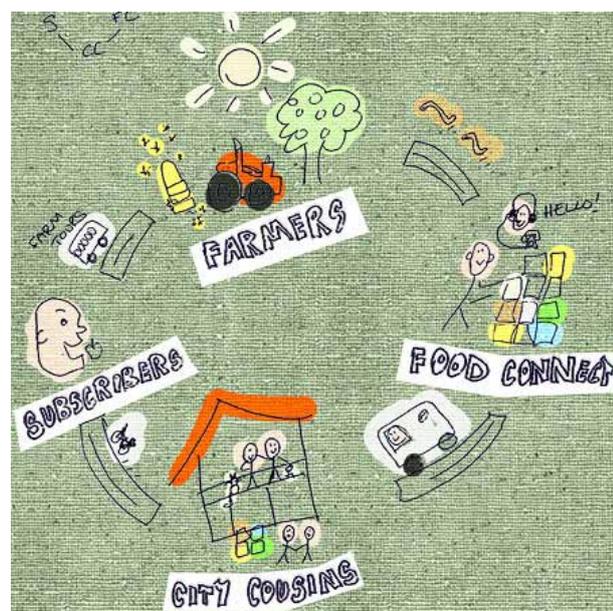
There are no figures on how many CSAs exist in Australia, but interest in the concept is growing, and several growers and farmers around the country are experimenting with this model. One that has been established for some years is the Purple Pear Permaculture Farm<sup>115</sup>, near Maitland, NSW. Owners Kate Beveridge and Mark Brown practice what they call the 'Relationship Marketing' model of CSA, i.e. they own the farm, grow the produce, and deliver to subscribers a weekly box of seasonal produce.<sup>116</sup> They also run numerous permaculture and other workshops, as well as farm tours, deepening their connection to their community and building local levels of knowledge of farming and food-growing and making techniques.<sup>117</sup>

### **Food Connect, Brisbane and Sydney, Australia**

Over time, many CSAs have departed from the original ideal of a single-farm risk-sharing arrangement with a group of nearby residents towards a more flexible seasonal fruit and vegetable box system. A variation on this system in Australia is the Food Connect social enterprise, which operates out of both Brisbane and Sydney.<sup>118</sup> Food Connect Brisbane sources produce from 100 farmers and growers within a five-hour radius of the city, and markets that produce to around 800 subscribers in the city and surrounding urban areas.

Food Connect has shown that it is possible to be fair to both farmers and eaters. While supermarkets pay farmers 10 cents or less in the dollar, Food Connect pays an average 50 cents.

As the adjacent illustration shows, one of the unique features of Food Connect's business model is the network of 'City Cousins'. These individuals are subscribers, but they also perform an essential function in the distribution of the produce. Produce is packed at Food Connect's warehouse and then sent out to the network of City Cousins, with each City Cousin receiving up to 20 or 30 boxes for nearby subscribers, who then come to collect their weekly box. Together with other features such as regular Farm Tours and the Farm Letter that goes in every box, this builds a sense of a 'Food Connect Community'. A 'Social Return on Investment' analysis conducted for Food Connect Brisbane in May 2011 showed that for every \$1 invested in the business, the social return (in terms of health, environmental and community outcomes) was \$16.83.



*Food Connect Brisbane's Operating Model*

### **Local and regional Food Hubs**

While farmers' markets and CSAs have expanded rapidly in the US, local food entrepreneurs understand that there is a need to move from perceived 'niche' markets to achieve a bigger impact in the effort to build a fair and resilient food system. This means carrying out some of the essential roles in a modern food system, in particular aggregation, storage, distribution and marketing: getting produce from farms into local businesses and institutions.<sup>119</sup>

This is essentially a wholesaling function, but with a 'local' and regional twist. In the United States, Food Hubs of various forms and sizes have emerged to meet this need, and there are now more than 100 in operation around the country.<sup>120</sup> Typically they require:

**Physical infrastructure:** a warehouse and coolroom; office space; and (potentially) a commercial kitchen / demonstration farm for value-adding and training

115 <http://www.purplepearfarm.com.au/>

116 <http://www.purplepearfarm.com.au/farm-food>.

117 <http://www.purplepearfarm.com.au/workshops-and-farm-tours>.

118 <http://www.foodconnect.com.au/>

119 <http://www.localfoodhub.org>.

120 <http://ngfn.org/resources/food-hubs/food-hubs>.

**Access to transport:** moving food from farms to the Hub, and from the Hub to customers

**Start-up financing:** the amount will vary depending on the scale and scope of the Hub's operations, and infrastructure and staffing requirements

**A marketing strategy:** ideally linked to a local / regional branding strategy for the particular region

**Logistical support:** to facilitate ease of purchases / orders, ideally using an online platform

Recent evaluations of the Intervale Food Hub<sup>121</sup> (a multi-farmer community-supported agriculture – CSA - enterprise, not unlike Food Connect), show that it achieved fairer prices for participating farmers, averaging 5 to 30% above comparable wholesale prices.<sup>122</sup> In addition, farmers receive 25% of CSA sales up front, and they 'also benefit from time and cost savings associated with combined storage, marketing and shared distribution'.<sup>123</sup>

In Australia, workers, growers and community members in Girgarre, Victoria, have formed a co-operative food hub<sup>124</sup> to restart and transform a food processing plant that was closed by the Heinz corporation in 2011. Local councils in Victoria and elsewhere are now looking to establish pilot food hubs; and an Australian Food Hubs Network has been formed to support and promote these efforts.<sup>125</sup>

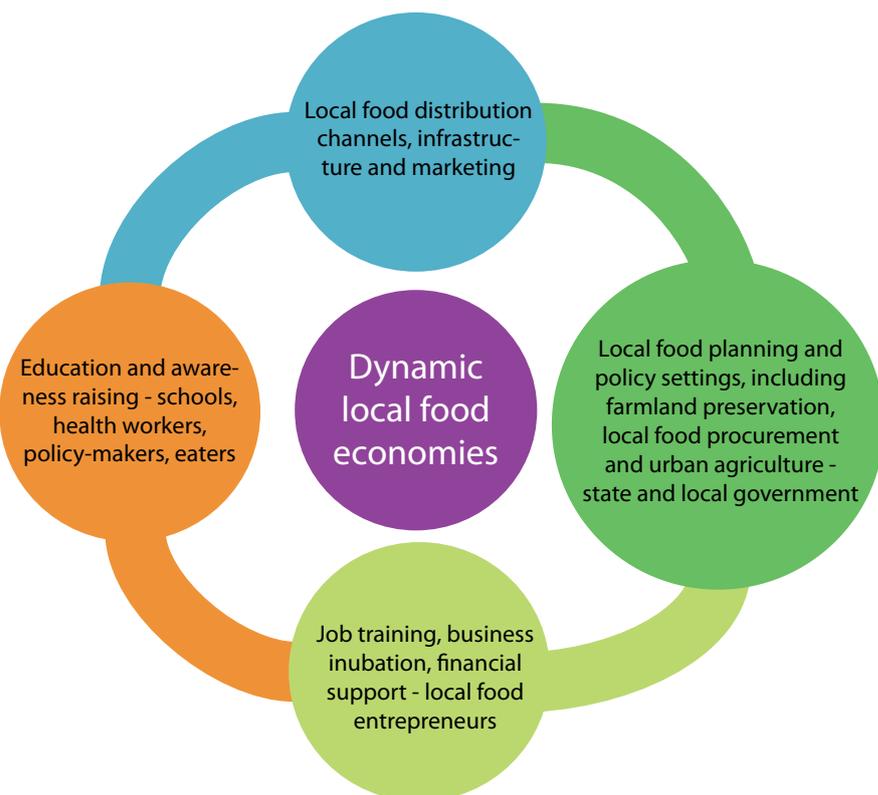
### **Regional branding and food cuisines**

Strong and innovative branding and marketing has been crucial to the revitalisation of many farming regions in the US, such as the farmer-chef partnership called the 'Vermont Fresh Network'.<sup>126</sup> The Hawkesbury Harvest has pioneered a similar approach in Australia.<sup>127</sup> The Bunyip Food Belt Project represents multi-

million dollar infrastructure investments in Melbourne's food and water security, and generates thousands of new, sustainable jobs in food manufacturing through enhanced agricultural production.

### **Open Food Web**

Revolutions in information and communications technology are at the cutting edge of the paradigm shift to distributed, networked systems. In Australia, the Open Food Web is a collaboration to promote and share solutions that facilitate direct exchanges between farmers and their customers. It is a network of Australian and overseas software designers and researchers, working to create open-source solutions that can be made available to producers around the country.



121 <http://ic.7thpixel.com/what-we-do/intervale-food-hub/food-hub-impacts/>

122 Schmidt, M.C., Kolodinsky, J.M., DeSisto, T.P., and Conte, F.C., 2011, "Increasing farm income and local food access: A case study of a collaborative aggregation, marketing, and distribution strategy that links farmers to markets." *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems and Community Development*, 1(4), 157-175, available online at: [http://www.agdevjournal.com/attachments/article/189/JAFSCD\\_Collaborative\\_Aggregation\\_August-2011.pdf](http://www.agdevjournal.com/attachments/article/189/JAFSCD_Collaborative_Aggregation_August-2011.pdf).

123 *Ibid.*, 167.

124 <http://gvfoodcooperative.com/>

125 See <http://www.facebook.com/AusFoodHubsNetwork?ref=ts>

126 <http://www.vermontfresh.net/>

127 <http://hawkesburyharvest.com.au/>

## Public procurement of Fair Food

A number of public institutions in New York, Norway and Rome, have public procurement policies to source fair and ecologically produced food for schools and other institutions.<sup>128</sup> This could be readily replicated in Australian with a commitment to targets for public institutions such as hospitals. For instance, a policy could require that 40% of food procured is organic or low chemical input by 2015. Such programs have been successful in Trondheim, Norway in delivering healthy food to hospital inpatients.

## What We Can Do

Forum participants had many ideas about the steps needed to achieve these goals and targets. What follows captures the most commonly mentioned proposals. More can be found in Appendix A.

<b>Ways Forward: What People Want</b>	<b>How to achieve this (some suggestions)</b>
1. Tackle the corporate control of the food system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a supermarket ombudsman with strong enforcement powers as a first step to tackling the abuse of market power by the supermarket duopoly against suppliers and shoppers</li> <li>• Carry out an independent, comprehensive national review of competition law and policy to address duopoly and oligopoly power across the food system</li> <li>• Vote with your feet, buy from small-scale local business</li> <li>• Promote improved working conditions throughout the food industry via union membership</li> <li>• Introduce comprehensive and easy-to-understand national food labelling laws covering GM, accurate country of origin,, palm oil and traffic light nutritional information</li> <li>• Protect children’s health through the implementation of restrictions on marketing junk food to children and the outright prohibition of advertising such foods to children under ten</li> <li>• Restricting and/or banning corporate sponsorship of schools and sporting programmes</li> <li>• Restricting government policies and practices that favour monopolistic companies e.g. the Commonwealth Government Basics card that can only be used in certain stores<sup>A</sup></li> </ul>
2. Increased support for local and regional food economies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support and promote alternative distribution channels and networks:</li> <li>• Establish more permanent farmers markets in central locations</li> <li>• Use the local/existing infrastructure – community food initiatives exist in schools and churches</li> <li>• Piloting local food hubs, mobile supermarkets, and food vans to support local food economies</li> <li>• Make local food more visible e.g. by setting up a local food cart at a shopping centre with an honesty box</li> <li>• The use of superannuation funds to invest in rural, regional and local food businesses</li> <li>• Encourage and support ethical investments in food social enterprises e.g. Australian Ethical Investments to invest in businesses like Food Connect</li> <li>• Federal and State loans programs to support food businesses start-ups and local food entrepreneurs</li> <li>• Promote and establish community gardens as a hub for education, gardening, healthy eating, recipe exchange etc</li> <li>• Get councils to establish more edible urban landscapes and encourage community food initiatives</li> </ul>

A. The Government Basics card is an income-management measure, first introduced in the ‘intervention’ into Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory in 2009, and now being piloted at various locations around the country: <http://au.news.yahoo.com/today-tonight/money/article/-/14171644/centrelink-new-basics-cardhttps/>. It restricts certain recipients of Centrelink payments from spending their money on alcohol, cigarettes and gambling, and also limits the stores at which they can purchase their food: <http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/enablers/centrelink/income-management/basicscard>.

## A VISION

*Imagine cityscapes where roundabouts are planted with kale and coloured lettuces, and public herb gardens, where flower boxes flourish with edible plants, and rooftop gardens are routinely designed into high-rise buildings. Imagine a society where children and the aged tend community kitchen gardens, and vacant land is transformed into greenspace gardens, where property developers are bound to plant fruit trees in median strips, install infrastructure to house farmers' markets within shopping complexes, and developers and planners routinely incorporate focal market places into developments and cityscapes.*

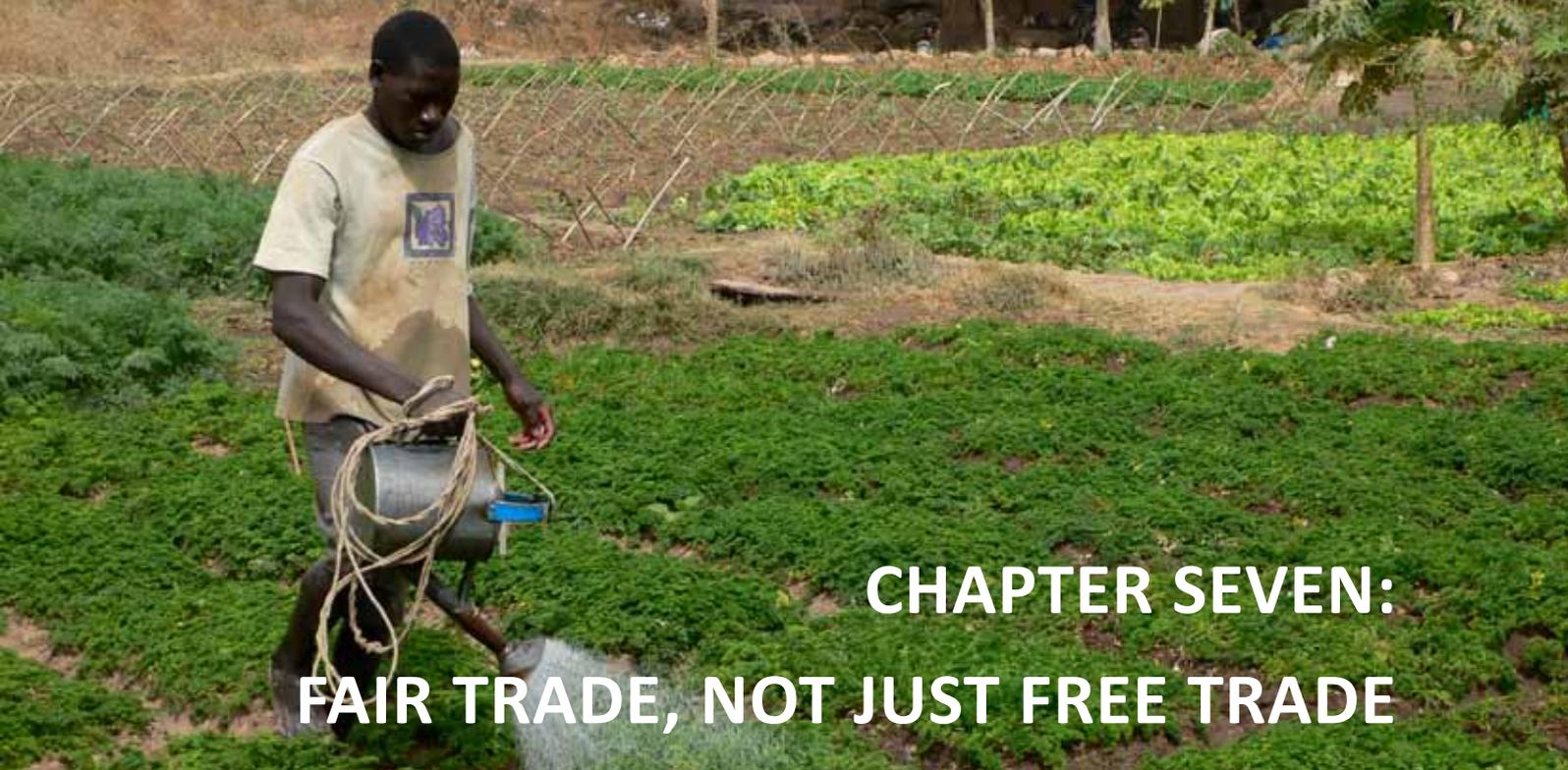
*Imagine a society where rural and agricultural land is valued equally or more highly than urban development, where sprawling cityscapes encompass farms, market gardens and orchards, where food continues to be grown locally, within essential reach of major population centres.*

*Imagine bustling market days when farmers and artisan producers arrive in market squares, malls and parklands with trucks and trolleys loaded with freshly grown and value-added seasonal food with flavour – new season apples, juicy ripe peaches, freshly dug spuds, snap green Asian vegies, golden yolk eggs, crusty sourdough bread, washed rind cheeses, grain-fed Wagyu beef steaks and plump free-range chickens, potted herbs and fresh-cut flowers for the dinner tables.*

*This is not a pipe dream, such market scenes happen regularly in cities across Australia but the continued evolution of local food systems will be facilitated by intelligent and sustainable land use planning, the application of common sense to regulatory issues, and the commitment to the incorporation of local food policy in the nation's future food plan.*

From "Creating Appetite for Farmers' Markets in Australia: A Submission to the National Food Plan Issues Paper", Australian Farmers' Markets Association, 2011.





## CHAPTER SEVEN: FAIR TRADE, NOT JUST FREE TRADE

### Challenges

The free trade agenda has not delivered the promised prosperity for all as we were told it would do. Levels of hunger, malnutrition, poverty, dietary-related ill-health, and inequality are rising. In any competition, there are always winners and losers; only in this case, we have billions of losers, and a handful of big winners.

The main beneficiaries of free trade are the larger corporations, and especially the supermarkets, which can take advantage of the economies of scale that trade liberalisation offers. Australian consumers seem to get the benefit through lower prices at the checkout, but at what cost? Thousands of Australian farmers continue to leave the land every year, due to a combination of unsustainable debt levels and declining terms of trade.

The outmoded concept of ‘comparative advantage’ is leading to a social and environmental race to the bottom. Comparative advantage, like low labour costs in developing countries, leads to systems where prawns that are grown in Scotland are shipped to Thailand to be hand-peeled before being returned to the UK.<sup>129</sup> This 12,000 km round trip has environmental costs in terms of the food’s carbon footprint before labour equity is factored in. While those at the sharpest end of the struggle over free trade are small-scale farmers and landless workers in the Global South, women especially, many of Australia’s farmers are also feeling the effects of cheap imports. In the spring of 2012, for example, citrus growers in Sunraysia were dumping tonnes of good produce in landfill.<sup>130</sup>

The free trade agenda may have been relevant in an era of cheap fossil-fuel driven, globalisation; but this era is coming to an end as these forms of energy become depleted. Just as the new economy of the future will be increasingly powered by renewable energy sources, so too the engines of economic development will need to become increasingly regionalised and localised.

While the World Trade Organisation process appears permanently mired, the free trade agenda is continuing via bilateral and multilateral channels. The most recent of these is the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (see below). Yet the hypocrisy of the process remains the same, as noted by Joseph Stiglitz, former economist of the World Bank:

*The bottom line [of the Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement, TPPA] is that there is no US*

129 [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/northern\\_ireland/6189870.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/northern_ireland/6189870.stm)

130 “Pick, truck, dump: Man furious as tonnes of citrus dumped in bush”: <http://www.sunraysiadaily.com.au/story/399106/pick-truck-dump-man-furious-as-tonnes-of-citrus-dumped-in-bush/>.

*commitment to free trade. It is really a commitment to getting other countries to give access to American producers to their markets, and the US reciprocates when it is convenient.*

### **Free trade undermines food sovereignty**

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994 saw a flood of cheap, subsidised US corn enter Mexico. This forced nearly 3 million Mexican small-scale farmers off the land. The country is now chronically food import-dependent, and is a major 'exporter' of so-called 'illegal immigrants', many from rural areas, to the United States.<sup>131</sup>

In our region, while Japan's farmers currently produce 40% of the country's food needs, the Japanese agriculture minister has estimated this will drop to 13% if Japan signs the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement – a trade agreement that is currently under negotiation, and involves Brunei Darussalam, Chile, New Zealand, Singapore, Australia, Canada, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, the USA and Vietnam. A trebling in Japan's rice import requirements will undermine the food sovereignty of other rice-producing countries; and is estimated to swell the ranks of the hungry in Asia by 270 million, according to Japan's Central Union of Agricultural Co-operatives.<sup>132</sup>

### **Free trade is not a level playing field**

Free trade is a legal charter of rights for the most powerful economic actors to further flex their muscles. Australia is currently party to six free trade agreements (FTAs), and is in the process of negotiating a further nine. These FTAs favour the more powerful countries, as Mexico saw with NAFTA. While Australia lowered its tariffs for US exporters under the Australia-US FTA, that agreement has made no impact on the large US farm subsidies, and gained very little additional US market access for Australian producers. Australian growers argue that cheap imports are taking away their domestic markets.

## **The Key Messages from the Forums**

There should be fair trade for all

Imported food should meet labour and environmental standards that Australian farmers have to comply with

Trade negotiations should be conducted transparently with public participation

## **Ways Forward: What People Want**

As many Australian farmers depend on export markets for their livelihoods, there was concern that the proposed focus on the local would mean either an end to trade altogether, or a large reduction in the current volumes of trade. As one rice farmer in the Murray put it, *Why stop sending our rice to Asia when it feeds so many millions of people? Would they be able to grow that amount for themselves? And what about places like Singapore?* There was also concern expressed about reduced levels of trade in a world with an increased population and a higher incidence of natural disasters: *What would happen if one country had a massive natural disaster?*

Some farmers also commented that some corporations, such as Sunrice, served an important purpose in facilitating export markets for their products, in the same way that the single wheat desk had provided an effective marketing function. The point being that, when talking about 'excessive corporate power' in the food system, care needs to be taken to differentiate players such as Sunrice, from the supermarket duopoly, whom all agreed had far too much power. It was acknowledged that the export trade is important to many Australian farmers – we know that Australia exports around 80% of the beef produced, and that it produces enough food to feed 60 million people. In that sense, Australia farmers have an important role in global food security, as well as in the Australian economy. That said, claims that Australia can somehow be the 'food-bowl' of Asia are clearly ridiculous, given Asia's population of 2.5 billion people. However, it is also recognised that not all trade was fair trade, particularly for goods coming into Australia. As a country positioned well and truly in a global, political economy, an open and inclusive debate is needed to explore Australia's reliance on both imports and exports, and how to manage this fairly and equitably,

131 <http://isites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k74756&pageid=icb.page414562>

132 <http://viacampesina.org/en/index.php/main-issues-mainmenu-27/food-sovereignty-and-trade-mainmenu-38/1119-la-via-campesina-australian-food-sovereignty-alliance>

and without compromising the sustainable livelihoods of less powerful people.

### **1. Transparent and Open Conversations**

These discussions raise the broader issue about the perspective of the People's Food Plan vis-a-vis the National Food Plan and the commodity exporting food sector. The question has been raised: is the People's Food Plan seeking to replace the current food system, or complement it? In relation to trade, are we suggesting that trade be dramatically scaled down, in favour of local production for local consumption? These are matters that will be further discussed as the People's Food Plan process continues in 2013. They are exactly the sort of questions that need to be asked and discussed; and which the Federal Government, in its *a priori* foreclosure of any discussion of free trade, has closed down.

### **2. Review all Free Trade Agreements (FTAs)**

That FTAs work to the benefit of most farmers is a myth promoted by governments and big corporate agri-business. Consumers may, in the short term, enjoy the benefits of cheaper food imports, but this is at the cost of long-term food sovereignty. An independent review of these agreements, and of all their impacts – social, environmental and economic - is long overdue, and the Australian people should have the opportunity to debate its findings and recommendations.

### **3. Support fair, transparent and co-operative trade**

Food sovereignty doesn't mean the abandonment of trade and the pursuit of total, absolute food self-sufficiency. Enjoying the foods from other countries and cultures is one of life's pleasures, and enriches us all. But trade should be conducted on the basis of some fundamental principles that genuinely work to the universal benefit: solidarity, transparency, respect for human rights, and ecosystem integrity. Trade, in other words, that is fair.

## **Inspiring Models**

### **The Fair Trade Movement**

There are a number of fair trade movements operating in Australia with perhaps the best known being Fairtrade Australia and New Zealand which is a member of the International Fair Trade Organisation. This is an independent, not for profit organisation whose board is elected by its members and includes representatives from Oxfam New Zealand, Friends of the Earth Australia and Christian World Services New Zealand. According to the Fairtrade website,

*For a product to display the FAIRTRADE Mark it must meet the international Fairtrade social, economic and environmental standards which are set by the certification body Fairtrade International (FLO). These standards are agreed through a process of research and consultation with key participants in the Fairtrade scheme, including producers themselves, traders, NGOs, academic institutions and Labelling Initiatives such as Fairtrade Australia & New Zealand.<sup>133</sup>*

#### **Quotes from the Forums**

*We would like fairer trade* (PFP participant, Barham)

*Education and self-awareness is very important. e.g Tim Tams have palm oil, they have a carcinogenic preservative and they are made with slave labour. This is a start – don't buy and endorse crap* (PFP participant Boonah, Queensland)

*Imported food should meet the labour and environmental standards that Australian farmers do* (PFP participant, Hobart)

*All 'free trade' negotiations should be transparent and take place with public participation* (PFP participant, Emerald)

Fairtrade report that six million people, including farmers, producers, workers and their families in 63 countries benefit from the independent Fairtrade system, receiving not only a fair price for their goods, but also a Fairtrade Premium for community-level investment. The certification also prohibits the use

133 <http://www.fairtrade.com.au/page/fairtrade-certification-mark>

of forced and abusive child labour. In Australia, food and beverage products such as coffee, chocolate, spreads and sauces are available with a Fairtrade certification mark.

Other fair trade organisations operating in Australia include the People for Fair Trade, who have recently joined with Tradewinds to distribute fairly traded tea and coffee. The Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network (AFTINET) is a national network of community organisations and many individuals concerned about trade and investment policy. On their website, they state:

*AFTINET supplies education materials, regular bulletins and speakers at public events. We make submissions to government and opposition parties to change Australian trade policy. We form links with similar organisations in other countries to argue for different and fairer rules for international trade and investment.*<sup>134</sup>

Other organisations with an Australian base or branch involved in trade campaigns and lobbying include Aid/Watch, Global Trade Watch and Jubilee Australia.<sup>135, 136, 137</sup>

## What We Can Do

Given the global interests of both major corporations and national/supranational levels of government, ‘what the people want’ has largely fallen on deaf ears. This does not mean we give up. We can take inspiration from the Occupy movement, who, despite lacking the political power of major corporations and particularly the banking sector, are able to get out their message globally and challenge the dominant government ethos as it relates to global politics, finance and trade.

	<b>Ways Forward: What People Want</b>	<b>How to achieve this (some suggestions)</b>
1	Transparent and Open Conversations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage in the People’s Food Plan conversations about international trade and help define and identify our position as it relates to Australian farming, food and our global obligations to the hungry.</li> <li>Familiarise yourself with the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement and explore the implications</li> <li>Demand to have your say – lobby your Federal MP directly, and join with AFTINET, Aid / Watch, Global Trade Watch and Jubilee Australia to get involved</li> <li>Use social media to lobby, debate, discuss and engage</li> </ul>
2	Review all Free Trade Agreements (FTAs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Submit the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement to a fully transparent and independent impact assessment; and put its adoption to a referendum-style national vote</li> <li>Conduct a Senate inquiry as a first step towards an independent audit of the costs and benefits of all free trade treaties in terms of their impacts on rural and regional Australia</li> <li>Using the tools and actions mentioned above, join us in calling for a review of all FTAs to which Australia are signatories</li> </ul>
3	Support fair, transparent and co-operative trade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vote with your feet, ask for Fair Trade products</li> <li>Join or engage with organisations that are pursuing fair trade and offer your support</li> </ul>

134 <http://aftinet.org.au/cms/about>

135 <http://www.aidwatch.org.au/>

136 <http://www.tradewatch.org.au/>

137 <http://www.jubileeaustralia.org/>

# CHAPTER EIGHT:

## ‘CRISIS OF PARTICIPATION’:

### THE NEED FOR FOOD DEMOCRACY



#### Challenges

Participants attending People’s Food Plan forums spoke of a ‘crisis in participation’ in the food system. This happens in many ways, from farmers lacking voice and power in the key decisions that affect their livelihoods, to food processors being undermined through cheaper imports, to eaters being denied full information about food purchases through comprehensive and honest food labelling. These are some of the symptoms of a food system in which the important decisions are made by or at the behest of a few powerful vested interests. A food system that is oligarchic, not democratic.

To move from food oligarchy to food democracy, and to achieve the goal of a thriving food system that works for the benefit of all, we need our institutions to think and function in ways that support the system as a whole. This is very difficult, since the governance of the food system in Australia, like elsewhere, is split across many government departments (primary production, health, planning, education, trade); across different tiers of government (federal, state and local); and across different sectors of the food system (agriculture, processing, transport and distribution, retailing, health). Increasingly, corporations such as food retailers are engaged in the governance of others, such as farmers, through their systems of private standards for home brand products and fresh fruit and vegetables. Areas of the food system that have been subject to ‘de-regulation’ in favour of the so-called ‘invisible hand of the market’ have been placed at the mercy of big business. Thoughtful re-regulation will help level the playing field and better protect small-scale producers and eaters.

Achieving an integrated approach to food policy will require challenging and overcoming deeply entrenched cultures of ‘silo-ing’ in the Australian bureaucracy at the local, state and federal level. Fundamentally, there needs to be a culture change throughout government, which sees a positive and proactive approach towards building fair, sustainable and resilient food systems. This means, for example, removing the obstacles that make it very hard for smaller producers to diversify and value-add to their farm businesses. It means Councils adopting policies that support and encourage urban and community food initiatives.

Despite the Australian Government’s own rhetoric of a participatory democracy<sup>138</sup> AFSA and its supporters feel that a great opportunity for a rethinking of the current food system was lost in the process of creating the National Food Plan. Whilst the process had a veneer of participation, in practice, the government hand-picked corporations and industry to serve as the DAFF’s Food Policy Working Group. This included the Australian Food and Grocery Council who represent the interests of big business (Heinz, Coca Cola, Nestle, etc) as well as Graincorp, Simplot, Linfox and Boost Juice. Whilst ‘consumers’ were represented by CHOICE, there was an absence of representatives from the health and environment sectors. Further,

138 Brenton Holmes (2012) Citizens’ engagement in policymaking and the design of public services [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/library/prspub/942018/upload\\_binary/942018.pdf;fileType=application/pdf#search=%222010s%22](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/library/prspub/942018/upload_binary/942018.pdf;fileType=application/pdf#search=%222010s%22)

'invitation only' roundtables were held for industry elites, and public forum participants had to apply online, giving details of their interest in the food system, before they were invited to take part. In Melbourne, the forum was deemed to be full, and the doors closed, despite people who attended and wanted to take part, but were not on the list. The 'public consultation' was reported to have gone ahead with many empty seats in the room, and a queue of people outside.

During the public forums, participants reported that the agenda was already cemented within a rationalistic, neoliberal policy discourse with built in assumptions about food security favouring the big business approach. One participant noted the food policy 'choices' suggested 'were between the devil and the deep blue sea' offering only more of the same chemical-laden industrial foods which are dependent upon both oil and major corporations. Indeed, the rhetoric of the National Food Plan is to further intensify production, with little recognition of how this might be achieved in the context of land degradation, loss of prime agriculture land to mining and housing, climate change, and the spectre of peak oil. Indeed, it was this absence of true participatory democracy that spurred the Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance into action with the People's Food Plan.

## Ways Forward: What People Want

Participants identified the following as potential goals for a more democratic approach to food system governance:

### The Key Messages from the Forums

Australians are disconnected from our food system, and this must be addressed. There is a 'crisis of participation'

Government (Federal and State) has given too much power to corporate actors, with the result that the food system is operating in their interests, rather than for the common good

All voices must be heard in developing food and agriculture policy, especially those of Indigenous Australians, farmers and food producers, and culturally and linguistically diverse communities

#### 1. *Genuine Participatory Democracy*

Disillusioned by the National Food Plan consultation rounds, many people who attended the forums called for a genuine opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to decision making, especially relating to something as fundamental as food. People want to engage in democratic processes, not only through voting in an essentially two-party system, but to be involved in face to face conversations so that decision makers can learn firsthand about how food issues affect people in their day to day lives. If people had a role in making the decisions that directly impact upon their lives, then the food system we have today would look quite different. Participatory democracy must underpin all government decision-making.

#### 2. *Do it yourself*

There was a strong theme in most of the forums of 'just do it yourself'. It was not seen as a good idea to wait around for government to 'get it right' and in the meantime, people felt they should do what they could to change the direction of the food system. For some, this meant becoming involved in backyard gardening, community gardens, and even guerrilla gardening. In Melbourne, participants reported operating outside of the formal food economy by 'growing your own' and engaging in 'swap meets'. The work of AFSA falls into the 'do it yourself' basket – in the absence of courageous government leadership, it is clear that society must act and achieve what it can right now, because the need for fair, sustainable and resilient food systems is urgent.

#### 3. *Farmers' forums*

A suggestion from the forums was the holding of farmer's forums across Australia's regions – giving farmers an opportunity to take part in decision making relating to agricultural, environmental and food policies. Such engagement would need to be genuine and meaningful for farmers to take time out of their working day, and travel to such meetings. Payments for attendance are also worth considering if the Government is sincere about participation. In many meetings attended by farmers, they meet with public servants who are receiving a wage and travel expenses to attend meetings, whilst farmers' time and travel is based on good will and volunteerism. It is important to show farmers that they are valued, and their

knowledge and experience can make an important contribution to government decision-making.

## Inspiring models

In the 100-plus North American food policy councils, there are models of democratic and inclusive, whole-of-system food governance that we can draw on.<sup>139</sup> These councils ‘work to increase collaboration across government [departments], social sectors and geographies; develop and implement multi-level organisational structures; recognise and support initiatives contributing to ‘diverse economies’; and include community—based, traditional and scientific knowledge’.<sup>140</sup> They are new forms of governance that are beginning to permit the redesign and reorientation of food systems, serving the needs of human well-being and ecosystem integrity. They are an important step in a positive direction.

### **Toronto Food Policy Council, Ontario, Canada<sup>141</sup>**

One of the longest-established Food Policy Councils is the Toronto Food Policy Council. Originally established as ‘a subcommittee of the Board of Health to advise the City of Toronto on food policy issues’, it is now an autonomous and self-governing body that ‘connects diverse people from the food, farming and community sector to develop innovative policies and projects that support a health-focused food system’.<sup>142</sup> Amongst other achievements, it has contributed to the formation of the following strategic City documents:

- The Toronto Food Strategy
- The Toronto Environmental Plan
- The Toronto Food Charter
- The Toronto Food and Hunger Action Plan

Today its members ‘identify emerging food issues, promote food system innovation, and facilitate food policy development.’<sup>143</sup>

### **The Food Alliance**

In Victoria, Australia, the Food Alliance is an organisation funded by VicHealth (the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation) and auspiced by the Population Health Strategic Research Centre at Deakin University. The Food Alliance aims to identify, analyse and advocate for evidence-informed policies and regulatory reform to enable sustainable food security and healthy eating in the Victorian population. In their submission to the DAFF National Food Plan, the Food Alliance have urged a rethinking of governance structures that would provide for greater participation and independence. These are endorsed by AFSA and include:

*Any mechanism for facilitating whole of government food policy must have decision-making powers, and should report directly to the Prime Minister. We propose that the key governance mechanisms for the National Food Plan should comprise a Ministerial Food Forum, an Advisory Council and an independent Food Commissioner.<sup>144</sup>*

### Quotes from the Forums

*Transform ‘participation’ from a blind supermarket transaction to educated choice and action – re-build connections between people and food / food production (PFP participant, Bendigo)*

*The pivotal involvement of producers is critical to the PFP, a bottom up approach would be to do something in this region that would also value producers who are otherwise disconnected from initiatives happening on the ground. We need more farmers involved in the PFP process. (PFP participant, Bendigo)*

139 Schiff, R., 2008, ‘The Role of Food Policy Councils in Developing Sustainable Food Systems’. *Journal of Hunger and Environmental Nutrition* 3(2), 206-228.

140 People’s Food Policy Project, 2011. *Resetting the Table: A People’s Food Policy for Canada*. Summary, available at: <http://peoplesfoodpolicy.ca/policy/resetting-table-peoples-food-policy-canada>.

141 <http://tfpc.to/>

142 <http://www.toronto.ca/health/tfpc/>, <http://tfpc.to/toronto-food/intro>.

143 <http://tfpc.to/toronto-food/intro>.

144 <http://www.foodalliance.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/National-Food-Plan-Green-Paper-Submission5.pdf>

### **Food Security Strategy, Belo Horizonte, Brazil**

The world-leading food security strategy designed and implemented by the city government of Belo Horizonte (pop 2.5 million) would not have achieved its extraordinary results (a 60% reduction in levels of infant mortality in ten years, a 25% reduction of people living in poverty, and increased consumption of fruits and vegetables) without the active support of farmers, businesses, church leaders and citizens. From the program’s start in 1993, the government department charged with its implementation has been advised by a 20-member council with representation from these various groups.

### **What We Can Do**

	<b>Ways Forward: What People Want</b>	<b>How to achieve this (some suggestions)</b>
1	<b>Genuine Democracy</b> <b>Participatory</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get involved in the People’s Food Plan in its next stage by participating and encourage others to do the same.</li> </ul>
2	<b>Do it yourself</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An information centre for everything related to food, from plough to plate</li> <li>• Community land tenure and entitlement – lobby Councils and State government for the community’s right to use land for food production</li> <li>• Organised advocacy efforts – from community groups, through networks, with assistance from the community health sector and not-for-profit organisations</li> </ul>
3	<b>Farmers’ Forums</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whole of government, genuine engagement to address the crisis in farming, with resources available to enable farmers to leave the property and travel to meetings.</li> </ul>

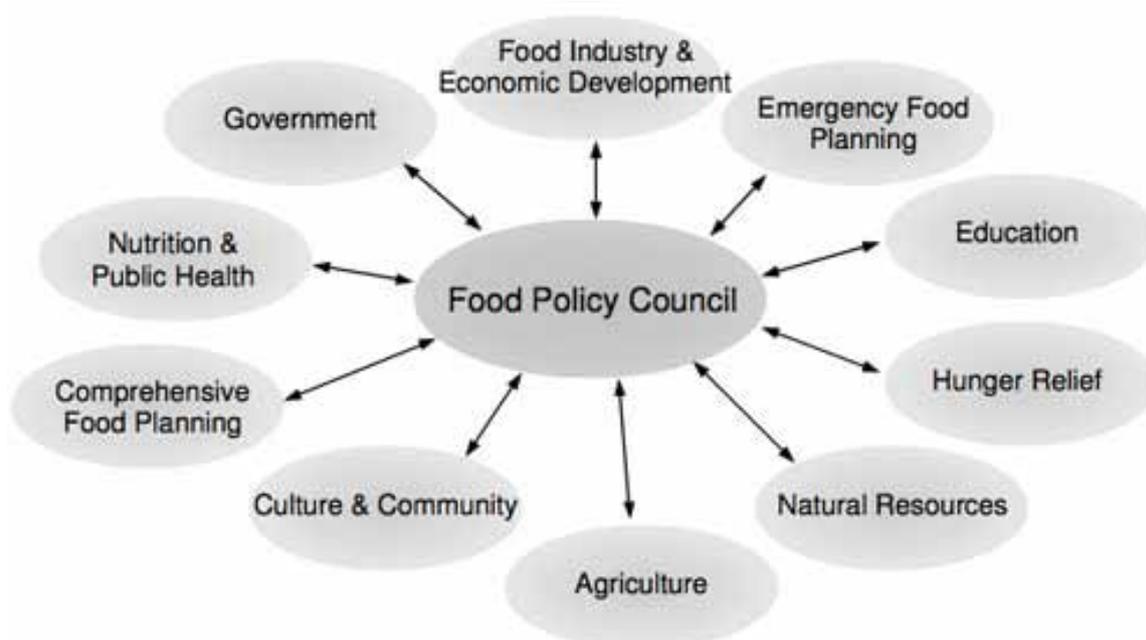


Diagram of the Lane County Food Policy Council (Canada), reproduced from: <http://www.fpplanecounty.org/overview/>



# CHAPTER NINE:

## WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE PEOPLE'S FOOD PLAN?

*You can rage against the darkness, or you can light a candle*

PFPP participant, Sydney.

In the coming months and years, we, the participants in the People's Food Plan process, will continue with our efforts to bring about the kinds of transformational change discussed in this document. With diversity as a core guiding principle, we'll be working on a wide range of strategies.

First, some of us will campaign at the national, state and local levels to achieve policy changes and to obtain government funding and support for fair food initiatives and projects. We have for the past two years urged the Federal government to get behind food localisation efforts, and requested the establishment of a special multi-million dollar funding stream for regional food systems in our submission to the National Food Plan Green Paper consultation.<sup>145</sup> At the state and local levels, we may focus efforts on implementing food literacy and gardening programs for schools; and working with like-minded organisations to campaign for planning law and policy reform in order to make it 'food-sensitive'. In some local government areas such as the Cities of Yarra, Maribyrnong and Melbourne in Victoria, and the Cities of Sydney and Marrickville in NSW, initiatives are already in place to support and develop urban agriculture, and to better cope with food waste. People's Food Plan advocates may also work towards extending these initiatives to other local government areas throughout Australia. Political campaigning is also likely to involve work around the 2013 federal election, lobbying candidates to make a fair food policy a priority.

Second, some participants in the People's Food Plan process want to put their efforts into direct action so as to make more immediate change. This may involve initiatives such as guerrilla gardening or collaborative permaculture-establishment projects, such as Permablitzes, to promote urban gardening and localised food production. Other ideas discussed in forums include supporting and establishing food-buying cooperatives or farmers' markets as an alternative to buying from the major supermarkets. There are many possibilities for engaging in this kind of activity, which aims to create different ways of living today, without waiting for governments to act.

Consistent with the principles of food sovereignty, and with creating new ways of doing and being, the People's Food Plan will continue to be a participatory, interactive process. The first step in broadening our coordination and collaboration will come with the establishment of working groups in 2013.

Working groups will be established around certain themes and possibly geographic areas, depending on the interests and capacity of participants. For example, we may establish a 'regional food systems' working group or a 'sustainable agriculture' working group. Some working groups may need to be localised, given the nature of their work, such as sustainable agriculture groups working on particular region-specific climate and conditions. Other issues have national application and significance, and working groups on those issues may benefit from a broad geographical base. For example, the supermarket duopoly, and

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<sup>145</sup> <http://www.australianfoodsovereigntyalliance.org/2012/09/26/afsa-submission-paper-to-the-green-paper-for-a-national-food-plan/>.

conflicts between land for mining and land for farming, are issues of national significance. They may generate working groups that collaborate across the country to develop national campaigns and initiatives.

The Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance will continue to guide and support the project and will continue its campaigning work for a just and sustainable food system. The actual work of the People’s Food Plan will be driven by its participants, guided by the principles set out in this Working Paper.

This Working Paper for a People’s Food Plan document will be launched in early 2013, and will form the groundwork for continuing campaigning and initiatives in 2013 and beyond. We look forward to working with anyone who is genuinely interested in building a better food system for Australia.

## Getting from here to there – a road-map

A plan is like a road-map. It describes pathways as to how we go from one place to another. Ideally it provides some signposts along the way, to show we’re going in the right direction, how far we’ve travelled, and how far we’ve still to go.

The People’s Food Plan aims to be part of the road-map that helps us get from an unfair and vulnerable food system, to one that is fair and resilient. The table below shows why we have to make this transition.

Existing Food System		Emerging Food System
Prioritises mass production and corporate profits	→	Prioritises health and ecosystem integrity
Entrenches urban / rural divide, because neither farmers nor urban agriculture is valued	→	Reconnects country and city, farmers and urban agriculture are valued
Founded on access to cheap fossil fuels, and as a result is highly polluting and highly vulnerable	→	Sustainable agriculture methods reduce dependence on fossil fuels, build lasting soil fertility and a resilient food system
Power and ownership is concentrated in the major food system sectors	→	Power is decentralised, ownership is diffused, the system is distributive
Food pricing and marketing is divorced from health and well-being	→	Food pricing and marketing prioritises health choices
Food issues carved up into separate government departments and jurisdictions	→	Food solutions come from collaborative partnerships within and among governments, farmers, food businesses and communities

*Adapted from Cultivating Food Connections 2010, p16.*

What then are the key steps as we continue down this journey many of us have already begun?

**Educate:** Raise our own awareness of the problems in the current food system, and that there are different ways of doing things. Learn what healthy eating and living means, and practice it daily.

**Discuss:** Talk with our family, our friends, our communities, about what we have learned, and what actions we can take. Is there a buying group locally that supports local farmers? If not, what would it take to start one?

**Collaborate:** Join or form a local food, food gardens or similar network. Explore what actions people are taking elsewhere in Australia and beyond, and see what is possible in your community. Remember, we’re only limited by what we imagine is possible!

**Act:** Find practical, immediate ways to recover and strengthen our connection to our food. Grow some of your own food. Get together with your neighbours to set up an edible streetscape. Build a kitchen garden at the local school if it doesn’t already have one. Shop at a farmers’ market. Join a CSA, food co-op or food buying group. Join a community garden. Rediscover – or deepen your appreciation of - the joys of cooking.

*Remember: Every step you take, every choice you make, every action you decide upon, brings us all closer to the destination of a fair and sustainable food system!*

## Appendix A: People’s Food Plan proposals

This Appendix contains many of the specific proposals for goals, targets and actions that were mentioned by participants in the various forums. For ease of reference, we have indicated to which tier(s) of government each proposal corresponds. As discussed in the body of the Working Paper, the assignment of governmental responsibility is intended to serve merely as a guide and organising tool for food groups, farmers and entrepreneurs around the country. Many inspiring initiatives and projects are underway all around the country and overseas, as we have highlighted. At the same time, supportive and coherent government policy at all levels would amplify the beneficial impacts of local and regional food systems exponentially. This has been the case in the United States, where years of funding and support for local food systems from the USDA has seen an explosion of farmers’ markets, community-supported agriculture initiative, Farm-to-School programs, Food Hubs, food literacy initiatives, and much more.

So while this Appendix is written for the members of the Australian fair food movement who created it through their participation in the People’s Food Plan forums, we also commend it to policy-makers and planners at all levels who are looking for innovative and successful ways to tackle systemic issues across the food system.

### Goals / Targets

People’s Food Plan Chapter	Content of proposal	Tier(s) of Government Responsible
Aboriginal food sovereignty	Enable Aboriginal communities full access to their traditional hunting and fishing grounds, and fresh fruit and vegetables at affordable prices, to address the crisis in Aboriginal health	Federal / State / Territory
Sustainable Agriculture	Australia to produce enough fruit and vegetables to meet the national requirements for a healthy diet for all	Federal
	Create a new Centre for Sustainable Agriculture, to provide research, development and extension services to farmers transitioning to lower-input systems	Federal
	Reduce levels of waste across the food system, from 40% to 20% within 10 years	Federal / State / Local
	Ban GM crops and foods; protect organic and biodynamic farms from GM contamination; and ensure labelling of all foods made using GM technology	Federal / State
	Diversified urban ecology / food production to be supported in the towns and cities	State / Local
	Support ongoing organic / chemical-free certification, offering greater financial incentives for organic and lower-input agriculture	Federal / State
	Stabilise and increase Australia’s bee populations	Federal / State / Local

Planning	Develop a national legislative framework for planning for food and agriculture, so as to create more uniform 'food-sensitive' state laws	Federal / State
	Develop an accounting system capable of assessing the true cost of lost arable lands from resource extraction, and creative ways of preventing these costs	Federal / State
	A requirement that miners rehabilitate their sites to a state capable of producing food at the same level prior to the mining operation	Federal / State
Fair Food Systems	Establish grants and loans programs for local and regional food systems	Federal / State
	Establish a supermarket ombudsman with strong enforcement powers as a first step to tackle abuse of market power by the supermarket duopoly against suppliers	Federal
	Reform competition law and policy to tackle the negative impacts of the supermarket duopoly	Federal
	A national, comprehensive labelling system, including GM, nanotechnology, sustainable fisheries, food irradiation, palm oil, and other social and environmental standards	Federal
	Adopt local and ethical food procurement policies, with specific targets, e.g. double the % of locally-sourced foods within five years	Federal / State / Local
Health	Design a national food literacy program, to be included in all schools by 2020; educating children and families about healthy and sustainable farming, and good nutrition	Federal / State
	Establish and implement effective measures to tackle the obesity pandemic, including restricting and / or prohibiting junk food advertising aimed at children, and consideration of a junk food tax	Federal
	Create large food labels with the traffic light system	Federal
Governance	Establish a pilot Food Policy Council in every Australian State	Federal / State / Local
	Establish pilot community land trusts as a model of participatory governance for sustainable food production	Federal / State / Local
	Develop a National Climate Change and Resilience Plan, broken down to bioregional actions and support, linked to food security / sovereignty, and incorporating soil health and water usage	Federal / State / Local
	Establish and pilot programs to encourage young people to enter farming and food production	Federal / State / Local
	Establish a National Food Commissioner, reporting to the Prime Minister	Federal
Fair trade	Carry out a Senate Inquiry of the impacts of all free trade agreements	Federal

## Actions

People's Food Plan Chapter	Content of proposal	Tier(s) of Government Responsible
Aboriginal food sovereignty	<p>Remove restrictions on the right of Aboriginal peoples to access and use their traditional hunting and fishing grounds</p> <p>Work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to establish and maintain edible food gardens and trees</p>	Federal / State / Territory / Local
Sustainable Agriculture	<p>Legislate for biodiversity – and value it</p> <p>Recognise the diversity of natural resources and their potential uses on title deeds</p> <p>Facilitate a country-city exchange program to increase awareness of food production and farming culture</p> <p>Design and implement programs to return food waste to the soil, through the whole supply chain</p> <p>Allow and implement a 100% capture and reprocessing of human waste as a food system input, at both home-scale and large farm-scale, and use the waste within the region</p> <p>Fund a national education program to promote gardening and urban food production, and its health and community benefits</p> <p>Establish Council seed depots</p> <p>Provide incentives to transform lawns into food production</p>	<p>Federal</p> <p>State</p> <p>Federal / State / Local</p> <p>State / Local</p> <p>State / Local</p> <p>Federal / State</p> <p>Local</p> <p>Federal / State / Local</p>

Planning	Identify and map all prime agricultural land across all Australian states and territories	Federal / State / Local
	All Councils top adopt food policies and (for towns/cities) urban agriculture policies, using the Food Sensitive Planning and Urban Design principles as a guide	Local
	An immediate moratorium on the sale of prime agricultural land	Federal / State
	An immediate moratorium on the expansion of the coal-seam gas industry, and other forms of mining, on quality agricultural land	Federal / State
	Every Council to allocate community spaces for farmers' markets to encourage local and seasonal eating	Local
	Review and if necessary change laws regarding the keeping of livestock on suburban land to encourage more independent food production	State / Local
	Develop incentives to encourage the sustainable use of arable land, e.g. rates discounts	State / Local
	Civic planners to reserve communal spaces for food growing and communal use, to support food security and affordability for all	State / Local
Fair Food Systems	Regulate the pricing and nutrition strategies of large supermarkets and food companies	Federal
	Permanent farmers' markets to be piloted at selected sites around the country	Federal / State / Local
	Create an interactive online map of all existing and emerging elements of local food economies around the country	Federal / State / Local
	Pilot multi-functional food hubs to be established at various sites around the country	Federal / State / Local
	Encourage and support ethical investments in food social enterprises	Federal / State / Local
	Make local food more visible	Local
Health	Research and monitor the health impacts of chemicals in and on food, creating a national, widely-publicised register	Federal / State
	Design and implement a high-profile public education campaign for healthy eating	Federal / State / Local
	Work with schools and other publicly-funded institutions (e.g. childcare, aged care, universities) to provide healthier food choices, supported by local and ethical food procurement policies	Federal / State / Local
	Introduce plain packaging for junk food	Federal
	Subsidise healthy food for remote communities	Federal / State / Territory

Governance	State and Local governments to facilitate food system stakeholder roundtables as first step towards food policy coalitions / councils	State / Local
	Establish state, local and regional farmers' forums to enable farmers to discuss their issues, concerns and priorities	State / Local
	Establish a national healthy food index to provide transparent and clear information for eaters	Federal
	Create local and regional information centres for everything related to food, from plough to plate - online and available from libraries and Council offices	Federal / State / Local
Fair trade	Submit the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement to a fully transparent and independent impact assessment; and put its adoption to a referendum-style national vote	Federal

## Appendix B: People's Food Plan process overview – Meetings held, attendees and methodology

Location	Region	Date (2012)	Attendees	Facilitator / Organiser	Notes on methodology
Bondi	Sydney	September	30	Claire	Introduction to PFP and political context, followed by a combination of general and small group discussion
Martin Place	Sydney	September	20	Claire	Introduction to PFP and political context, followed by a combination of general and small group discussion
Martin Place	Sydney	October	5	Claire	Introduction to PFP and political context, followed by general discussion
Enmore	Sydney	September	6	Claire	Introduction to PFP and political context, followed by general discussion
Sydney Food Fairness	Sydney	October	12	Claire	Introduction to PFP and political context, followed by general discussion
Eco-Topia	Sydney	October	6	Claire	Introduction to PFP and political context, followed by general discussion
Emerald	Victoria	October	15	Bec / Neesh / Bob	Dotmocracy; informal discussion
Carlton	Melbourne	October	20	Bec / Neesh / Bob	Dotmocracy; informal discussion
Beyond Zero Emissions, Kindness House Fitzroy	Melbourne		6	Bec / Neesh / Bob	One was an informal discussion around the 7 key PFP discussion paper areas; one was a combination of both those; and one was more focused around local community experiences and actions
South Melbourne Commons	Melbourne		18	Bec / Neesh / Bob	
Moreland Food Growers Network, CERES Brunswick East	Melbourne		12	Bec / Neesh / Bob	
Bendigo	Regional VIC	October	20	Jen	General introduction to PFP; in-depth discussion to occur later in kitchen-table talks
Barham	Regional VIC		NA	Katrina Myers	
Hobart	Tasmania	October	NA	Hannah	Dotmocracy; informal discussion
Launceston	Tasmania	October	15	Sandy	
TAS Leaders Forum	Tasmania	October	24	Sandy	
Hamilton	Newcastle	November	50	Rhyall	
Maitland	Newcastle	October	15	Rhyall	
Newcastle	Newcastle	October	25	Rhyall	
Canberra	ACT		NA	Michael	
Noarlunga	Adelaide	November	13	Nat	
Adelaide CBD	Adelaide		16	Nat	Dotmocracy

Location	Region	Date (2012)	Attendees	Facilitator / Organiser	Notes on methodology	
Coffs Combine St Community Garden	Regional NSW	October	20	Nick	General introduction to PFP / NFP; brainstorming on key issues / concerns; small groups working on health and education	
Bellingen Environment Centre	Regional NSW	November	7	Nick	General introduction to PFP / NFP; in-depth discussion on Values & Principles; Goals & Objectives; and Actions & Strategies	
University of Queensland	SEQ		26	Cat	<p>Each South-East Queensland event was unique to the local community however the key components common to all included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Context setting: brief discussion around NFP, who is involved, and what we are aiming to achieve.</li> <li>Every forum discussion was based around the People's Food Plan. Chapter discussions centred around people talking about– what they like, dislike and what's missing. Some of the groups were able to discuss every chapter and other groups discussed chapters based their interests and priorities.</li> </ul> <p>At the larger events, the participants broke up into smaller groups to discuss the chapters amongst themselves.</p>	
Turnstyle Community Space	SEQ		11	Cat		
Brisbane Square Library	SEQ		24	Cat		
Croquet Club, South Brisbane	SEQ		8	Cat		
Gold Coast – Griffith University campus	SEQ		20	Cat		
Sandgate	SEQ		17	Cat		
Sunshine Coast – Beerwah	SEQ		50	Cat		
Boonah – the Outlook	SEQ		13	Cat		
Northey St City Farm	SEQ		15	Cat		
Food Connect Subscriber Event	SEQ		20	Cat		
Samford Valley	SEQ		8	Cat		
Food Connect Farm Speaking Tour x 4	SEQ		50	Robert Pekin		
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>610</b>			

## Appendix C: A Comparison Table of the National Food Plan vs People’s Food Plan

<b>Approach / Attitude / Principle</b>	<b>National Food Plan</b>	<b>People’s Food Plan</b>
<b>Time-frame</b>	20 years	100+ years
<b>Main stakeholders</b>	‘The food industry’, especially corporate agri-business elites and major retailers – National Food Policy Advisory Working Group	Ordinary folk
<b>Consultation process</b>	Top-down, questions pre-determined, key issues (e.g. free trade, commodity focus) not up for discussion, lack of transparency, lack of public engagement	Bottom-up, community-led; all questions open, process open-ended, starting in August 2012, finishing date not determined
<b>Understanding of functioning of current food system</b>	‘Stable, secure’, efficient, productive, high quality – all is good	<p>System highly dysfunctional – 70% or more of family farms dependent on off-farm income</p> <p>Over 75% of Australians overweight / obese by 2025</p> <p>Over 90% reduction in irrigated agriculture in Murray-Darling Food Bowl because of climate change</p> <p>Over 23% of GHG emissions come from the food system</p> <p>Land and water systems severely degraded</p> <p>High dependence on oil – 10 calories of oil to produce 1 calorie of food</p> <p>System not sustainable, fair or resilient</p>
<b>Scope of change required</b>	Incremental, piecemeal reform	Transformational, root & branch reform
<b>Vision</b>	‘Sustainable, globally competitive, resilient food supply, supporting access to nutritious and affordable food’	A food system that delivers fairness for family farmers and food system workers; health and well-being for all Australians, irrespective of income or other status; and which sustains and restores to health and fertility soils, waterways and ecosystems
<b>Key objectives</b>	<p>Ramp up commodity production of grains, livestock and dairy to ‘seize market opportunities in Asia’</p> <p>Bring in foreign investment and ownership of Australian land and agricultural to boost exports (p 128, 187)</p>	Re-orient the food system so the overriding objectives are human health and well-being, dignified livelihoods for food producers and food system workers, thriving local and regional economies, and ecosystem integrity

<b>Understanding of 'sustainability'</b>	Narrow and economic: "Australia's food businesses have opportunities over the long term, arising from global trends and Australia's comparative advantages" (p48)	Holistic, systemic and integrated: A sustainable food system is one which can continue to reproduce itself over the long-term, fulfilling its basic objectives of feeding us well, providing dignified livelihoods for farmers and food system workers, and caring for the soil and living ecosystems.
<b>Attitude towards Australia's food security, sustainable production and distribution systems</b>	<p>Australia is food secure because it exports two-thirds of what it produces, food system is stable and high-quality</p> <p>Climate change acknowledged as a risk, but assumption is that 'innovation' and technology will deal with it, i.e. neither climate change nor any other risks (e.g. peak oil, peak phosphorous) demand a shift to more sustainable agricultural systems</p> <p>Australia assumed to be energy-secure (p70)</p>	<p>Food insecurity is widespread amongst vulnerable and low-income groups in Australia</p> <p>Over 90% of Australians don't eat recommended intake of veg, and the country doesn't produce enough greens / orange veg</p> <p>Impacts of climate change and peak oil, plus highly centralised and long-distance food distribution system, means that there are serious risks and vulnerabilities; hence there is an urgent need for transition to sustainable agricultural systems</p>
<b>Attitude towards global food security</b>	<p>Global food insecurity is the result of poverty, waste, trade distorting policies, and low agricultural productivity</p> <p>Australia's role is a) boost exports b) transfer technology &amp; expertise to developing countries c) promote free trade (p 250)</p>	<p>Global food insecurity is the result of a corporate-dominated &amp; oligarchic food system that is anti-small &amp; family farmer, anti-poor, dispossesses rural communities and entrenches inequalities</p> <p>Fundamentally its resolution requires a democratised global food system in which sovereignty is returned progressively to national governments and to local communities</p> <p>Further trade liberalisation will feed corporate profits but it won't feed people well</p>
<b>Attitude to family farmers</b>	No vision for family farmers – their numbers will continue to decline and they will be replaced by corporate farming models (p 159)	Thriving family farms are at the centre of thriving rural communities, and have a vital role to play in the transition to a sustainable, fair and resilient food future
<b>Attitude to the market</b>	<p>Market-led approach is the best, no or minimal intervention required, either as regards land management and use, or as regards food product development and marketing (p 133)</p> <p>Govt does not propose a shift to sustainable production systems (p201), even though it favours the national application of genetically modified organisms</p>	Market-led approach has demonstrably failed in terms of healthy food for all, sustainably produced, and providing dignified livelihoods for producers and workers. Intervention is necessary – to protect prime farmland, to ensure the right to farm for family farmers, to ensure diversity in the retail sector, to encourage sustainable farm practices, to control the junk and fast food industries

<p><b>Approach to tackling obesity pandemic</b></p>	<p>Obesity individualised, seen as issue of ‘poor food choices’</p> <p>Business-as-usual, reliance on food industry self-regulation, educating consumers about health choices – a failed strategy</p> <p>No new proposals to reduce prevalence of obesity</p> <p>No recognition of the need for a fundamental shift to a healthy and sustainable diet</p>	<p>Obesity is a structural issue, its roots lie in power of food companies to shape food choices – ‘the obesogenic environment - &amp; structural subsidies to the junk food industry</p> <p>Experience elsewhere (e.g. Scandanavia) shows that regulation and intervention is required, including strict controls on advertising to children, and implementation of a sugar / fat tax</p> <p>National Preventative Health Taskforce (2009) recommended these measures as a matter of urgency</p> <p>Must be coupled with comprehensive and national food and nutrition literacy education</p>
<p><b>Attitude to GM and new technologies</b></p>	<p>Enthusiastic – develop national strategy for its consistent application, to overcome moratoria in some states, and low consumer acceptance (p153-4)</p>	<p>GM is fundamentally about corporate profit and creating further dependencies for farmers. It has failed to deliver on its promises of increased yields, and has instead delivered super-pests and super-weeds</p>
<p><b>Approach to food governance and leadership</b></p>	<p>Decision-making powers reserved to DAFF, with proposed advisory Ministerial Food Forum, Stakeholder Committee on Food and Australian Food Council to ‘facilitate dialogue between stakeholders’ (p 53)</p> <p>Likely outcome is that the voice of agri-business and food retailers will dominate the Stakeholder Forum and marginalise those of other stakeholders (Food Alliance brief, p5-6)</p>	<p>Key principles for food governance include: people- and community-centred; food as a human right; promoting wellness and strengthening resilience. Food policy at the Federal level should be led by the Department of Health, not DAFF, and with a National Food Council that accords equal participation and real decision-making powers to the community, health, environment, family farming, consumer and diverse food business sectors, as it does to corporate agri-business and large retail. The work of the NFC should be informed by a diversity of local and regional Food Policy Councils with multi-stakeholder representation, facilitated by local government and accountable to their local communities.</p>

## Appendix D: What's missing from the National Food Plan?

- **Any acknowledgement that the industrialised food system is socially and environmentally destructive, and that a paradigm shift based on a new set of values and principles is required.** No target is set or proposed for reducing the GHG emissions that the food system generates. No target is set or proposed for reducing its fossil-fuel intensity, nor for transitioning as a matter of urgency to more sustainable agricultural systems.
- **Any real recognition of the thriving fair food movement in Australia.** Permaculture is not mentioned. Transition initiatives are not mentioned. Local food networks and economies are not mentioned. Urban agriculture is not mentioned. Innovative farm practices, such as pasture cropping and no till, are not mentioned. Social enterprise gets one mention, in a brief paragraph about the Tasmanian Government's *'Food for All'* strategy (p51). Community gardens and backyard gardens are mentioned once, in relation to possible ways to support food security in remote indigenous communities – but the green paper says that the 'cost-effectiveness [of these initiatives] are yet to be been demonstrated' ( p 87). Farmers' markets do get some recognition, but only in the context of 'changing consumer demand' (p 114).
- **Any recognition that the profit interests of corporations do not inevitably equate to the well-being of people, and the integrity of ecosystems.** The National Food Plan is guided throughout by the assumption that 'the market' knows best and will look after us all. The idea that 'the market' may be responsible for the fact that, as one permaculturalist put it, the 'globalised industrial food system is the most destructive force on the planet', cannot be contemplated within the government's worldview, as set out in this Plan.

The 'National Food Plan' is actually a misnomer. This is an 'Industry Food Plan'. It began life at the urging of big business, those interests have guided and shaped its formation, and we can now see the result. The idea that this is a plan for all Australians is disingenuous. It isn't; it's a Plan to meet the needs and priorities of agri-business and large retailers.

Food isn't an optional extra in life. In a very material, as well as spiritual sense, what we eat is who we are. That's why food is far too important to be left to impersonal 'market forces' which are fundamentally not concerned with human or ecosystem well-being. It's time for all of us to take responsibility for our food system, to exercise our democratic rights as citizens, and to participate in working out, together, what sort of food system we want. That's what the People's Food Plan is about.

For more information, visit: <http://www.australianfoodsovereigntyalliance.org/>,

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*'Bioluxuriance in the Wet Tropics: Australian Rainforest fruits, cross-sections of seed capsules'* © Sophie Munns 2013

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