



# AUSTRALIAN FOOD SOVEREIGNTY ALLIANCE

Response to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Fresh Food Pricing  
New South Wales

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**Prepared by**

Sarah de Wit

*Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance*

We thank the committee for presenting this opportunity to make a submission. AFSA welcomes all further opportunities to participate in this Parliamentary Inquiry and hope that the NSW government will again facilitate stakeholder engagement across the agricultural and food sector.

## Key recommendations

1. Make it a New South Wales (NSW) state priority to lead Australia's observance of our international obligation to establish the Right to Food. The Committee should form a methodology for monitoring public policies and compliance with obligations under the right to adequate food.
2. Research and report on viable and sustainable payment arrangements such as the Community Supported Agriculture model (CSA) and farmers' markets by way of facilitating direct participation of producers in the Inquiry.
3. Protect arable land and soil fertility by fortifying the NSW planning system for horticulture production in urban, peri-urban, regional and rural areas.
4. Reduce heavy reliance on production inputs, especially chemical inputs such as pesticides and artificial fertilisers, and facilitate farms and market gardens that increase resilience to climate fluctuation and strengthen the health and vitality of farming and communities.
5. Explore ways to strengthen competition and consumer law protections for growers, for example the [Horticulture Code of Conduct](#) which came into effect on 1 April 2018.
6. Facilitate nutritious and local fresh food intake in social sectors and in institutions. The Committee should, for example, report on the NSW Health Department's milk supply contract with foreign-owned Dairy Farmers, replacing Norco.<sup>1</sup>
7. Mitigate producers' vulnerability to climate variability by exploring funding prospects and industry support for practical solutions such as regenerative agriculture.
8. Commence an assessment of the current and potential disruption of fresh food pricing directly caused by [Amazon's recent acquisition of supermarket chain Whole Foods](#). This should include consultation with growers who are impacted by the discounting of wholesale fresh food.
9. Undertake investigations that can found a detailed understanding of factors in domestic and export value chains that influence pricing and, in particular, farmgate prices. More research is needed to understand how Australians access food through their own production and purchasing activities.
10. Conduct a survey to gather information about food access across the retail sector, including farmers' markets and Community Supported Agriculture participants (CSAs).
11. Recognise the worth of improving transparency and price disclosure through the value chain.<sup>2</sup>
12. In reinforcing the Right to Food, the Committee should not overlook other rights such as worker and labour rights and the right to water, land and access to other productive resources.

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<sup>1</sup> ABC Rural, 15 May 2018, Dairy Farmers land NSW hospitals' milk supply contract over local Norco, draws angry reaction from farmers, <<http://www.abc.net.au/news/rural/2018-05-15/norco-no-longer-supplying-hospitals-in-favour-of-os-supplier/9758830>>.

<sup>2</sup> AgriFutures, Food price determination in the Australian Food industry. <<http://www.agrifutures.com.au/related-projects/food-price-determination-in-the-australian-food-industry/>>. The 2004 Price Determination in the Australian Food Industry report emphasised the need for greater transparency.

13. Encourage the NSW government to foster the state's food security and strengthen its efforts to identify 'Food Sheds' by consulting with shires and taking into consideration current and emerging research in relation to peri-urban planning.
14. Consider fresh food subsidies for lower-income families. Targeted public health strategies, including subsidies, discounts or incentives for lower income households are necessary to make food more affordable.<sup>3</sup>

**As guiding objectives, the Committee should:**

- Ensure that all stakeholders in the food system can actively participate in key decisions that affect the system
- Support growing numbers of farmers in the transition to agroecological production, which re-integrates environmental priorities into production decisions.
- Recommend and support policy and legislative measures that contribute to the health and well-being of all Australians, especially those who are vulnerable and marginalised.
- Promote the local and regional production and distribution of food, so that greater quantities of fresh food may be consumed closer to where it is produced.
- Work with other stakeholders and governments to tackle the excessive concentrations of corporate power at key points in Australia's food economy.

## Who we are

The Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance (**AFSA**) is a collaboration of organisations and individuals working together towards a food system in which people can create, manage, and choose their food supply and distribution system. AFSA is an independent organisation and is not aligned with any political party. We have more than 700 individual, organisational, business, and farm members.

In 2014 we established a producers' branch of AFSA, Fair Food Farmers United (FFFU) to provide a balanced voice to represent farmers and advocate for fair pricing for those selling to the domestic market, connect Australian farmers for farmer-to-farmer knowledge sharing, and to be a voice for farmer-friendly regulations and standards.

We are part of a robust global network of farmer-led organisations involved in food security and food sovereignty policy development and advocacy. We are members of the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC), Urgenci: the International Network for Community-Supported Agriculture, and La Via Campesina – the global movement of peasant farmers, and we have strong relationships with Slow Food International and its Australian

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<sup>3</sup> ABC, 31 March 2016, Fruit and vegetables, healthy food cost more in regional Victoria: study, <<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-03-31/rural-victorians-paying-more-for-healthy-food/7285482>>.

chapters. We also provide support for the sole Australasian representative on the Civil Society Mechanism (CSM), which relates to the Committee on World Food Security (CFS)

We work extensively with primary food producers and consumers across every state and territory in Australia. Our committee has consisted of published academics and lecturers from the University of Melbourne, RMIT, Deakin University, University of Tasmania, University of Sydney, and QUT. We have also had representation from farmers from every state, and local advocates and campaigners such as Food Connect, Friends of the Earth, Fair Food Brisbane, and the Permaculture Network.

Our vision is to enable regenerative farming businesses to thrive.

Australians increasingly care about the way their food is produced, including its social and environmental impacts. They seek out food that is grown locally and without damage to the environment. Food produced on small regenerative farms is increasingly in demand, and we believe that it is critical that government heeds changing community expectations and facilitates, supports and encourages the growth and viability of regenerative agriculture while protecting the environment and human and animal health.

## Food sovereignty is

“The right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems”

*- La Via Campesina, the global small and family farmer movement, representing 200 million people in 70 countries across five continents*

The core of Food Sovereignty lies in the following principles:

- Food is a human need and a basic right, rather than a commodity
- Food systems should be democratically constructed, responding to diverse social, cultural and environmental conditions.
- Food systems should be based on a strong commitment to social justice: for farmers, food system workers, and the most vulnerable members of our society who experience food insecurity.
- Resilient food systems require long-term environmental sustainability, where agriculture transitions away from total dependence on fossil fuel and chemical inputs; and towards solar energy and regenerative soil fertility.

- Resilient and sustainable food systems will be more localised and regionalized.
- Trade in food and agricultural products can enhance economic and social well-being, but should be conducted on the basis of international solidarity, respecting and not undermining the Food Sovereignty ambitions of other peoples and countries

## Background

An Upper House inquiry was established to examine the price of fresh food in New South Wales. Committee Chairman, Revd the Hon Fred Nile, MLC, said, ‘this inquiry will examine trends in the pricing of fresh food in New South Wales compared to both domestic and international markets’.

‘The committee will also **consider the relationship between wholesale prices paid to farmers and the retail price paid by consumers, as well as payment arrangements between growers, wholesalers and fresh food retailers**’.

The Terms of Reference state that the Premier and Finance will inquire into and report on the price of fresh food in New South Wales, and in particular:

- (a) trends in pricing, comparable to other states in Australia and internationally
- (b) the relationship between wholesale prices paid to farmers and the retail price paid by consumers
- (c) payment arrangements between growers, wholesalers and fresh food retailers
- (d) the prevalence of food insecurity in New South Wales
- (e) the identification of ‘food deserts’ and any efforts to address them
- (f) the impact on fresh food prices in New South Wales of:
  - (i) transportation costs
  - (ii) the level of competition between retailers,
  - (iii) drought, climate change and extreme weather events,
  - (iv) new retail operators, such as AmazonFresh, and
- (g) any other related matter.

## Food Price Determination in the Australian food industry

*The value chain is perceived by many participants, from farmers to consumers, to lack transparency in relation to price determination and profit allocation. This has resulted in discussion and comment from, for example, farmers, peak industry bodies and consumers supportive of sustainable*

*agriculture, about the apparent discrepancy between farmgate prices received by producers, both for produce consumed domestically and for export, and the prices paid by consumers. There have been attempts to draft and introduce to the parliament Bills that would require supermarkets to, for example, display the farmgate price next to the retail price. Although supermarkets have attempted to respond to concerns about the pricing 'system', they can be perceived as having a vested commercial interest in the discussion. Although Australia exports around two thirds of its agricultural food production, in many instances, this provides a relatively minor contribution to total international trade—the impact of this on Australia's ability to influence prices should be put into context.*<sup>4</sup>

Producers bear the rising costs of electricity, fertilisers and other inputs, while supermarkets and wholesalers continue to lower offers to growers. As a result, returns are increasingly volatile when dependent on use of direct supply to major purchasers or wholesale markets. Another major issue is that the processing price is decreasing. For example, lowered demand in conjunction with the processing price of Valencia oranges has forced grower to pay 30 cents per kilo to grow Valencias with a return of only 16 cents. It now costing growers per kilo to produce Valencia oranges.<sup>5</sup>

The Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation presented '[From farm to retail – how food prices are determined in Australia](#)' to the Government in 2016. The analysis summarised the factors that primarily set prices along supply chains in each major food sector or category. These were their key findings for the Fresh fruit and vegetables sector:

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<sup>4</sup> AgriFutures, 2014, <<http://www.agrifutures.com.au/related-projects/food-price-determination-in-the-australian-food-industry/>>.

<sup>5</sup> The Sydney morning Herald, < <https://www.smh.com.au/business/companies/fruit-and-vegies-why-do-they-cost-so-much-and-who-gets-what-20160115-gm6kf8.html>>.

Farmgate	Processing/Wholesale	Retail
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevailing balance of seasonal supply and demand of fresh produce at the time of marketing/supply.</li> <li>• Returns variable dependent on use of direct supply to major purchasers or wholesale markets.</li> <li>• Climatic events and regional seasonality.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevailing balance of seasonal supply and demand at the time of marketing, enhanced by ineffective transparency at certain stages (including packing and wholesaling).</li> <li>• Integrated supply chains with retailers reduces some price uncertainty and generally delivers a higher gross return to suppliers based on specifications.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prices set to provide target margin over full costs of produce category.</li> <li>• Strong influence of perceived price-sensitive points to consumers, with periodic fluctuation according to fruit availability and quality.</li> <li>• Short-term pricing subject to local competitive pressure between grocery chains and specialists.</li> <li>• Competitive price points of frozen/preserved product.</li> </ul>

The analysis found that the relationship between farm and retail prices were strong. It also produced a high-level summary of the common factors seen across food categories. As recommendations, the analysis emphasised the need to improve transparency.

Price determination should involve considering the variety of inputs, processes, economic forces, and other factors that are reflected in the final price of food.<sup>6</sup>

## Food insecurity and health

Food security debates have only recently emerged in Australia. It is predicted that the population could reach 35 million by 2050.<sup>7</sup>

The current food system – and our farmers in particular - are under enormous stress, as the United Nations previous Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Dr Olivier de Schutter, has stated in [his final report](#). He has also emphasised that countries should be rebuilding local food systems, which is in direct opposition to the Australian government’s current focus to increase our agricultural exports.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> AgriFutures, 2014, <<http://www.agrifutures.com.au/related-projects/food-price-determination-in-the-australian-food-industry/>>.

<sup>7</sup> Joanne Millar and Jane Roots, 2012, Changes in Australian agriculture and land use: implications for future food security, Institute of Land, Water and Society, Charles Sturt University, NSW, Australia. <<https://researchoutput.csu.edu.au/ws/portalfiles/portal/8816111>>.

<sup>8</sup> De Schutter, O., Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Final report: The transformative potential of the right to food, United Nations, 2014, p 15; available at <http://www.srfood.org/en>.

The Committee would also be aware of the increasing threat of climate change on food production, as identified by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate change (IPCC).<sup>9</sup>

The debate on food security will be of interest in maintaining stable governmental system into the future. The IPCC is correct to be concerned over decreased crop yields due to shifting weather patterns, and this change to climate is being reported on the ground by our farmers and supported by both the CSIRO and the Bureau of Meteorology.<sup>10</sup>

Health and wellbeing of Australians is also at risk with more than 9 in 10 people aged 16 and over not consuming sufficient serves of vegetables and fruit.<sup>11</sup>

Low access to adequate fresh food is aggravated by housing stress, low incomes, disability and poor access to transport. Food insecurity and poverty have been shown to be intrinsically linked.

For instance, in Sydney (“Australia’s least egalitarian city”<sup>12</sup>), the Australian Bureau of statistics reported 11.4 percent of income going to one percent of residents.

As published by the University of Sydney:

- 5% of Australians cannot regularly feed themselves or provide their families safe, healthy food without relying on charity.
- The [rates of food insecurity](#) for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, most of whom live in urban areas, are five times higher than those of other Australians.
- The most food insecure are 20 to 40 percent more likely to suffer from obesity due to their reliance on cheap, calorific fast food.<sup>13</sup>

In rural and remote Australia, Australians experience great disparity in the cost of healthy food.

<sup>14</sup> A study found that this was largely due to the cost and length of transport, the quality of fresh fruit and vegetables deteriorating fast, storage and handling of fresh produce, fresh fruit and

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<sup>9</sup> IPCC WG11 AR5, Climate change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability, Vol 1 Global and Sectoral Analysis, Chapter 7 Food Security and Food Production Systems

<sup>10</sup> State of the Climate Report, 2014, CSIRO and Bureau of Meteorology.

<sup>11</sup> AIHW 2012. Australia’s food and nutrition 2012. Cat. No PHE 163. Canberra: AIHW.

<sup>12</sup> The Conversation, 8 August 2017, Egalitarian or Edwardian? The rising wealth inequality in Australia, <https://theconversation.com/egalitarian-or-edwardian-the-rising-wealth-inequality-in-australia-81832>.

<sup>13</sup> Second Bite, <<https://www.secondbite.org/information-and-resources/>>.

<sup>14</sup> The Conversation, 23 December 2013, Rural Australians are missing out on affordable fresh food <<https://theconversation.com/rural-australians-are-missing-out-on-affordable-fresh-food-21358>>.



vegetables being less available, more expensive and of poorer quality. Regional and remote areas are also among Australia's most economically disadvantaged and residents generally have less disposable income to spend on healthier food options. The study found that this means rates of [diabetes](#), [heart](#) and [kidney disease](#) in rural and remote Australia are among the highest in the world.

*Country Victorian families have to fork out up to \$40 more for healthy food per fortnight than suburban counterparts, a study has found. Monash University researchers sampled the cost of a healthy food basket at 115 major and independent stores.*<sup>15</sup>

Further statistics and findings were canvassed by the Australia Council of Social Service's most recent report on poverty in Australia.<sup>16</sup>

Reporter and academic Dr Alanna Mann relevantly stated that "*statistics alone are not a valid indicator of food poverty. They can't tell us everything, least of all the lived reality of food poverty and our failure to fix it.*"<sup>17</sup>

*Land enclosure, privatisation, legislation, excessive pricing and patents have all played a role in limiting the access to food as a public good. The industrial food system exists mainly to maximise profit for a few, not to maximise the nutritional benefits of food to all.*<sup>18</sup>

### **In order to improve health and well-being, the Committee should consider:**

- Applying the same taxation principles to nutrient-poor, energy-dense foods as are applied to tobacco, i.e. these products are detrimental to public health and a huge burden on the public purse.
- Making consistent recommendations of the World Health Organisation and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food. For example, so-called 'sugar' and 'fat' taxes introduced in many countries across Europe.<sup>19</sup>
- Consider corporate sponsorship of health initiatives. This could apply to the fast-food, junk-food and tobacco industries.
- Curtailing the ability of large industries to target young children as consumers of their products.

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<sup>15</sup> Herald Sun, Country Victorians pay more for healthy food, <<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/victoria/country-victorian-families-paying-more-for-healthy-food/news-story/30b4ab39bfccc6aa13d388a92c34715a>>.

<sup>16</sup>ACOSS, <[http://www.acoss.org.au/images/uploads/ACOSS\\_Poverty\\_in\\_Australia\\_2014.pdf](http://www.acoss.org.au/images/uploads/ACOSS_Poverty_in_Australia_2014.pdf)>.

<sup>17</sup> Alana Mann, 11 April 2016, What does the human right to food mean for Australians living in food poverty?, Opinion, <<https://sydney.edu.au/news-opinion/news/2016/04/11/-the-right-to-food---and-how-1-2-million-australians-miss-out.html>>.

<sup>18</sup> The Conversation. <<https://theconversation.com/staying-alive-shouldnt-depend-on-your-purchasing-power-20807>>.

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.epha.org/a/4814>

- Measures to support regional food sources in the social sector and in schools and hospitals. For example, communal food gardens and orchards should be an integral part of all new residential developments.

## The Right to (Fresh) Food

As a signatory to the United Nations (UN) Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Australia is bound to ensure the full enjoyment of the universal human rights it outlines, include the right to adequate food.<sup>20</sup>

That obligation includes *respecting, protecting, facilitating and providing* access to adequate food to ensure food security and healthy livelihoods.<sup>21</sup>

The Right to Food is now a well-established concept world over, aided by the special mechanisms of the UN, which has been appointing Special Rapporteurs on the Right to Food for over three decades.<sup>22</sup> This emerging policy framework has been strongly endorsed by experts such as the United Nations Special Rapporteurs on the Right to Food. It is now being implemented in Constitutions, laws and government-civil society institutions in a growing number of countries and localities around the world, from Ecuador and Venezuela in Latin America, to Nepal in South Asia, to Mali in Africa, to Spain and Italy in Europe, and Maine and Vermont in the United States.

Australia is currently lagging in government policy on the right to food. Indeed, the Department of Agriculture has set out a number of aspirational agricultural and food policies and has set up numerous task groups in order to improve policymaking. However, major determinants of food prices along value-chains are becoming more complex in nature and connection to other factors. Access to food among the population is largely unequal despite our high production rates and competitiveness with the export industry.

In order to achieve better success in meeting its obligations, Australian arms of governments must address the challenges within the food system, including concentrated control of our fresh food supply and an economic model that limits the possibilities of realising the right to food.<sup>23</sup> This model restricts the role of the State in regulating the domestic food market.

<sup>20</sup> Article 2 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).

<sup>21</sup> United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, <<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Food/Pages/FoodIndex.aspx>>.

<sup>22</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization (2012b), *Right to Food Timeline*, Legal Office, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, archived from the original on 6 June 2012. <<https://www.webcitation.org/68Cm7UmiN>>

<sup>23</sup> Alana Mann, 11 April 2016, What does the human right to food mean for Australians living in food poverty?, Opinion, <<https://sydney.edu.au/news-opinion/news/2016/04/11/-the-right-to-food---and-how-1-2-million-australians-miss-out.html>>.

Concurrently, Australia is ninth highest on the inequality scale among the 26 OECD countries and 14 percent of our population lived below the poverty line in 2014.<sup>24</sup> Australia is clearly failing to deliver its obligation to guarantee the right to food. This calls for greater understanding and evaluation by Governments and responsible industry bodies.

To become a leading state in addressing the impacts on fresh food prices, the committee members of this Inquiry should thoroughly consider the challenges faced by fresh food producers, such as increased industrialisation of the food system, climate change and other economic, social and cultural issues. By considering the right to food, the Committee will be better equipped to address these issues.

Australia needs to strengthen its efforts to establish the right to food. Despite the adoption of the *Voluntary Guidelines to support the progressive realisation of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security* by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN (FAO) in 2004, the Right to Food remains unrealised for one out of seven people, globally.

*The Right to Food Guidelines do not provide legal entitlements but provide a framework for the development of national strategies and policies including budgeting and allocation of funds to food security. States including South Africa, Kenya, Switzerland, Bolivia, Ecuador, Mexico and Brazil have made constitutional provisions guaranteeing the right to food with varying success.*<sup>25</sup>

## AFSA's contribution to Right to Food

### People's Food Plan

AFSA recognises the failure of the Australian government to fulfil its obligation to guarantee the human right to food. In 2010, AFSA created the Peoples' Food Plan as an alternative to a corporate-led, market-driven food policy that ignores household food security and leaves food relief organisations to fill the gap. It was written in extensive collaboration and consultation with community groups, non-corporate farmers, social entrepreneurs, health and nutrition professionals, trade unionists, academics and other working people. It represents their interests and priorities, not the interests and priorities of big business. The fundamental guiding principles of this Plan were based in the internationally-recognised framework of food sovereignty.

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<sup>24</sup> ABC < <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-10-12/poverty-levels-among-australians-on-the-rise-across-report-abs/5807624>>.

<sup>25</sup> Alana Mann, 11 April 2016, What does the human right to food mean for Australians living in food poverty?, Opinion, <<https://sydney.edu.au/news-opinion/news/2016/04/11/-the-right-to-food---and-how-1-2-million-australians-miss-out.html>>.

Dr Alanna Mann, a senior lecturer in the University of Sydney's Department of Media and Communications, and former committee member of AFSA, emphasises the significance of AFSA's work towards the right to food. Dr Alanna Mann is a leading a research project at the [Sydney Environment Institute](#) examining the social-cultural dimensions of food security in the Sydney City Local Government Area, where eight of the ten most densely populated and culturally diverse neighbourhoods in Australia are located.<sup>26</sup> She advocates for affordable, accessible and healthy food being made available to everyone, and recommends creating a publicly-funded safety net for the most vulnerable.

### Annual Australian Food Sovereignty Convergence

AFSA also runs Food Sovereignty Convergences which encourage participation from attendees including government ministers, our members, farmers, chefs, Aboriginal Traditional Owners and the broader public. The Convergence facilitates wide-ranging and inclusive discussions around the measures needed to promote Fair Food. At last year's Convergence in Canberra, the topic of 'right to food' in Australia and at a global level was discussed, among many other issues relating to food sovereignty. (See our media release 16 October 2017).

### Meeting of the Coordinating Committee of the Civil Society Mechanism

In May 2017, AFSA President Tammi Jonas participated in a Meeting of the Coordinating Committee of the Civil Society Mechanism (CSM), in Italy.

The Civil Society Mechanism (CSM) for relations with the United Nations Committee on World Food Security (CFS) is the largest international space of civil society organisations (CSOs) working to eradicate food insecurity and malnutrition.<sup>27</sup>

Participants spoke about wealthy states such as the US using the word 'red line' referring to the right to food ('redlining the right to food'). They emphasised the importance of food and health becoming the centre of the right to food framework.

## Indigenous Food Sovereignty and Remote Communities

Low access to affordable fresh food in many remote communities calls for more consultation with those communities, importantly including indigenous communities. It is not possible to lay the foundations of food sovereignty without talking about indigenous sovereignty.

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<sup>26</sup> Alana Mann, 11 April 2016, What does the human right to food mean for Australians living in food poverty?, Opinion, <<https://sydney.edu.au/news-opinion/news/2016/04/11/-the-right-to-food---and-how-1-2-million-australians-miss-out.html>>.

<sup>27</sup> Civil Society Mechanism for relations to the UN Committee on World Food Security, What is the CSM? <<http://www.csm4cfs.org/the-csm/>>.

“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)*

Food sovereignty provides a process for transforming the current food system to ensure that those who produce food have equitable access to, and control over, land, water, seeds, fisheries and agricultural biodiversity. All people have a right and responsibility to participate in deciding how food is produced and distributed. Governments must respect, protect and fulfill the right to food as the right to adequate, available, accessible, culturally acceptable and nutritious food.<sup>28</sup>

## La Via Campesina and international efforts

The Via Campesina’s Declaration of 2001, titled ‘Our World is Not for Sale’, food sovereignty is defined as the right of peoples to define their own agriculture and food policies, to protect and regulate domestic agricultural production and trade in order to achieve sustainable development objectives, to determine the extent to which they want to be self-reliant, and to restrict the dumping of products in their markets. Food sovereignty does not negate trade, but rather it promotes the formulation of trade policies and practices that serve the rights of peoples to safe, healthy, and ecologically sustainable production.

This declaration calls upon governments to adopt policies that ‘promote sustainable, family-farm based production rather than industry-led, high- input and export-oriented production and names governments as responsible for promoting market policies to meet these goals as well as food safety and quality criteria “appropriate to the preferences and needs of the people”

### Brazil

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

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<sup>28</sup> International Planning Committee, 2009

establishment of 'Popular Restaurants' that served heavily subsidised meals made from local food.

### Toronto

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.

## Agroecology

*Agroecological* farming is the application of ecology to the design and management of sustainable agroecosystems<sup>29</sup>. Agroecological farmers favour long-term strategies that are flexible and can be adjusted and re-evaluated over time. They aim to diversify production on farm, which creates resilience ecologically, and for farmers and eaters in the face of climate change, but also for shifting market prices<sup>30</sup>. At the core of agroecology is the idea that the type of farming undertaken must be appropriate for that particular environment.

This farming philosophy has been gaining an increasing following globally as farmers are beginning to seek out more sustainable farming methods. The concept has been endorsed by the Food & Agriculture Organisation of the UN (FAO) as a means to feed growing populations sustainably<sup>31</sup>.

The aim is to design complex and diverse agroecosystems for all the individual parts to eventually support and sustain each other to prevent the outbreaks of pests and disease common in monoculture systems. In practice this means incorporating a range of livestock, grains and plants in ways that minimise external inputs by re-using waste on the farm, spreading out the risk of relying on just one crop, conserving water and looking after the soil<sup>32</sup>.

The Committee should support growing numbers of farmers in the transition to agroecological production, which re-integrates environmental priorities into production decisions.

Agroecology ought to be anchored to the right to food as a strategic goal to form access. Effectively consumers would be provided alternative options of healthy and nutritious food, for example, food that is not necessarily certified 'organic'. This should involve vast stakeholder consultation with consumers as well as building better public policy.

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<sup>29</sup> Gliessman, S.R., *Agroecology : the ecology of sustainable food systems*. 2007, Boca Raton: CRC Press.

<sup>30</sup> Parfitt, C., et al., *THE PEOPLE'S FOOD PLAN. A common-sense approach to a fair, sustainable and resilient food system*. , in *Working Paper*, C. Richards and N. Rose, Editors. 2013, Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance: Kambah.

<sup>31</sup> FAO, *Final report for the International Symposium on Agroecology for Food Security and Nutrition*. 2015, Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations: Rome.

<sup>32</sup> SOCLA, *Acroecology: Key Concepts, Principles and Practices*, ed. T.W.N.a.S.C.L.d.A. (SOCLA). 2015, Penang: Malaysia: Jutaprint.

## Local governance

### Victoria

A study led by Monash University spanning 2012-2014 found the price of fruit and vegetables across the state rose 12 per cent on average, while non-core foods like sugar, margarine and oil actually fell 3 per cent.

The researchers looked at foods people "should be eating", found the further the store was from Melbourne, the higher the cost of healthy food. "The cost of food is one of the major factors influencing the choice of food, so if a healthy diet is less affordable it's something people are less likely to buy."

A key finding was the fluctuation in price of fruit and vegetables compared to other food groups in the basket.

### Melbourne case study

Local government food security policies are being developed slowly around Australia. 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 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.

## Community Supported Agriculture

A CSA (which stands for Community Supported Agriculture) is a membership model that helps farmers distribute risk when there are unexpected increases or decreases in supply, and to manage our herd as per known demand. In sharing some of the farmers' risk, a CSA helps connect eaters more closely to the farm and knowledge of food production.<sup>33</sup>

CSA was developed in Japan in the 1970s and is based on the Principles of Teikei.

Members of CSAs are more connected to where their food comes from by way of gaining a deeper understanding of farmers' ethics and of food production.

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<sup>33</sup> Jonai Farms CSA, <<http://jonaifarms.com.au/csa/>>.

AFSA supports the CSA model because we believe (and can attest to) the positive changes it makes on local food systems. By providing more genuine options to eat ethically produced food, CSAs enact food sovereignty.

Australia has a growing CSA movement as small-scale farmers move to this solidarity economy for financial security, risk sharing, and deeper connection with the people who eat their produce.

To find examples of the many CSAs operating amongst our membership base, please refer to [our directory](#).

## Planning for fresh food pricing security

The Committee should consider the current trends in urban sprawl and peri-urban development in NSW and the relevant planning challenges associated with loss of rural land and food bowls.

*Peri-urban areas play an important role in agricultural production. Although these regions comprise less than 3% of land used for agriculture across the five mainland states, they are responsible for almost 25% of Australia's total gross value of agricultural production.*

*This figure may be conservative due to a significant amount of agricultural production being grown and consumed locally, retailed through Farmers' Markets and less formal farmgate sales which are not recorded in the census statistics, states, "State and local governments need to recognise the loss of finite areas of productive land around cities as a negative externality requiring strategic intervention."*

We recommend the Committee address the gap in research apparent here. The Committee should conduct a survey to gather information about food access across the retail sector, including farmers' markets and CSAs.

Data on the area of agricultural land being lost annually to urbanisation is currently unavailable in Australia on a national scale despite the obvious trends and growing public concerns.

Remaining and expanding intensive agricultural industries dominate landscapes on the urban fringes, effectively causes further conflict between urban and rural landscapes.

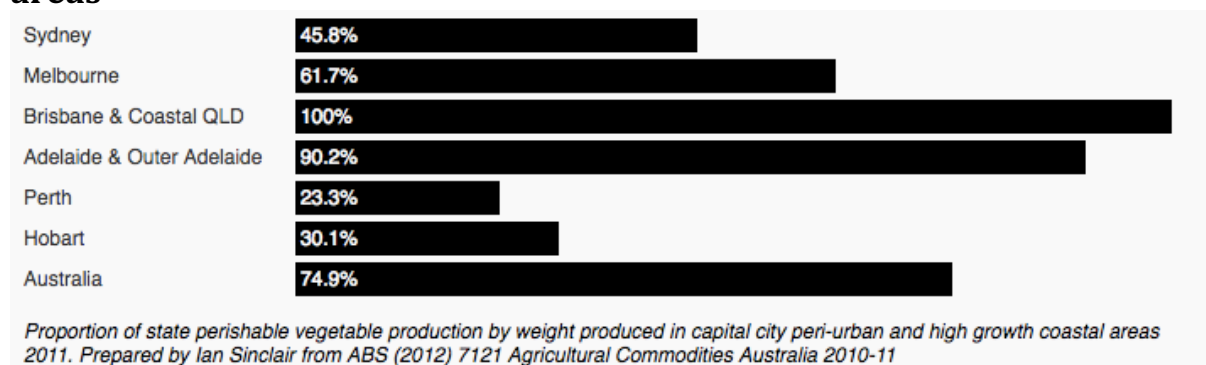


## Food Security: Preserving Valuable Land for Farming

The increasing attention of the NSW Premier and the Department of Planning and Environment on further housing for the state<sup>34</sup> has made negative impacts on rural zones in NSW. Peri-urban areas have been targeted as future growth spots, which endangers precious prime agricultural land previously reserved for food production. The increased restriction of rural activities in the Sydney Catchment Water Area has also triggered issues among NSW's small producers, for the impacts of rural development in these areas has been bundled into one collective issue rather than one to be managed based on intensity of the culpable industries.

"In fact, the benefit of Sydney's agriculture to the economy is estimated at upwards of \$4.5 billion. Loss of agriculture therefore presents serious risks to the resilience of the city, to the health of residents and the viability of farmers' operations."<sup>35</sup>

### How NSW compares Amount of food produced in capital city peri-urban areas



Source: [Melbourne's food future: Planning a resilient city foodbowl](#)

Data from the **Sydney Peri-Urban Network** Issues Paper shows that the peri-urban area is a significant producer of nurseries, perishable vegetables, meat chickens, ducks, turkeys, other poultry and eggs. The data represents historical ties between agriculture and markets on the edges of urban areas. It identifies that this is because of proximity to markets and good growing climate, access to water and soils.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>34</sup> NSW Department of Planning and Environment, Development Assessment Best Practice Guide, March 2017, pg. 2.

<sup>35</sup> University of Technology Sydney. The future of Sydney's food bowl. 17 February 2016. <https://www.uts.edu.au/research-and-teaching/our-research/institute-sustainable-futures/news/future-sydneys-food-bowl>

<sup>36</sup> Edge Land Planning, Sydney Peri-Urban Network Issues Paper, September 2015, pg. 9.

The reforms must address this underlying issue of the perceived or actual conflict between residential and agricultural land use. The Rural Production Zones **must** maintain the objectives to preserve land for agricultural use, as the pressures of development for non-agricultural uses are being felt in peri-urban areas that have not been responsibly managed to date and have forced farming further and further from major cities and regional cities.

If the NSW Government is committed to rural development, then it ought to substantiate this commitment by supporting agricultural uses that are compatible with the area. The Government has stated that it is committed to reducing land use conflict.<sup>37</sup> The Government has also identified opportunities for “targeted settlement”. Low-risk agroecological systems are clearly best management practice for NSW’s future food supply.

The NSW Government conducts thorough geospatial mapping exercises to identify “prime agricultural land” or ‘Strategic Agricultural Land’.<sup>38</sup> AFSA encourages NSW to further protect these selected areas, to expand them, and to strengthen its efforts to identify “Food Bowls”<sup>39</sup> or “Food Sheds”.

The Sydney Peri-Urban Network of Councils (**SPUN**) comprises 12 Councils surrounding Sydney and formed to stimulate discussion and action by all levels of Government. SPUN wrote in its 2015 Report that “peri-urban areas play a vital food security role for Sydney (as a food bowl and due to relatively low “food miles”)”.<sup>40</sup>

The University of Technology Sydney’s (**UTS**) Food Shed Project is being conducted by the Institute of Sustainable Futures as part of one of their key research areas, ‘Food Futures’. The research produced ‘Mapping Sydney’s Potential Foodsheds’ through funding from the [LGNSW Building Resilience to Climate Change](#) scheme. SPUN, represented by Wollondilly Shire Council, is a key partner on the project.

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<sup>37</sup> Page 6 of the Explanation of Intended Effect, accessed at: [http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/~/\\_media/Files/DPE/Other/primary-production-and-rural-development-eie-2017-10.ashx](http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/~/_media/Files/DPE/Other/primary-production-and-rural-development-eie-2017-10.ashx)

<sup>38</sup> Sharing and Enabling Environmental Data. Datasets accessible at: [https://datasets.seed.nsw.gov.au/dataset?q=agriculture&sort=score%20desc%2C%20metadata\\_modified%20desc](https://datasets.seed.nsw.gov.au/dataset?q=agriculture&sort=score%20desc%2C%20metadata_modified%20desc)  
Accessed via: <https://data.gov.au/dataset/42e2a51d-3c11-431f-ac62-f8511c859516>

<sup>39</sup> In Victoria, the University of Melbourne’s *Foodprint Melbourne project* have published a report highlighting that Melbourne’s “foodbowl” is an important building block in a resilient and sustainable food future for the city. The report summarises project findings about what grows in Melbourne’s foodbowl and what it takes to feed the city, and it outlines the economic value generated by Melbourne’s foodbowl. The report highlights that: **1) The loss of Melbourne’s foodbowl is not inevitable as the city grows** if growth on the city fringe can be limited to existing growth corridors and strong targets are set for urban infill and increased urban density; **and 2) Melbourne can plan for a resilient city foodbowl** that provides healthy food for a growing population, promotes a vibrant regional food economy and acts as a buffer against future food system shocks.”

<sup>40</sup> Wollondilly Shire Council, SPUN Action Plan, 2015, accessed at: <http://www.wollondilly.nsw.gov.au/assets/Documents/Planning-and-Development/SPUN/Sydney-PeriUrban-Network-of-Councils-SPUN-2015-Action-Plan.pdf>

The aim of the project is to understand the major factors that affect Sydney's future food production. Interactive spatial maps of Sydney's future food production and demand until 2031 show the consequences of failing to value peri-urban food production in the current planning strategy. One such consequence is unconstrained population growth planned under the Sydney Metropolitan Strategy. By engaging with stakeholders, the Food Shed Project researches potential impacts, desirability and feasibility of a range of future food production scenarios and how this contributes to the resilience of cities like Sydney in the face of future shocks and stresses.<sup>41</sup>

The project essentially mapped where current and potential food producing areas are located around Sydney.<sup>42</sup> In the range of scenarios modelled, the first assessed what would happen if Sydney's agriculture was not protected and the proposed population growth under the Metro Strategy occurred in an unconstrained way. This is shown in Figure 1.

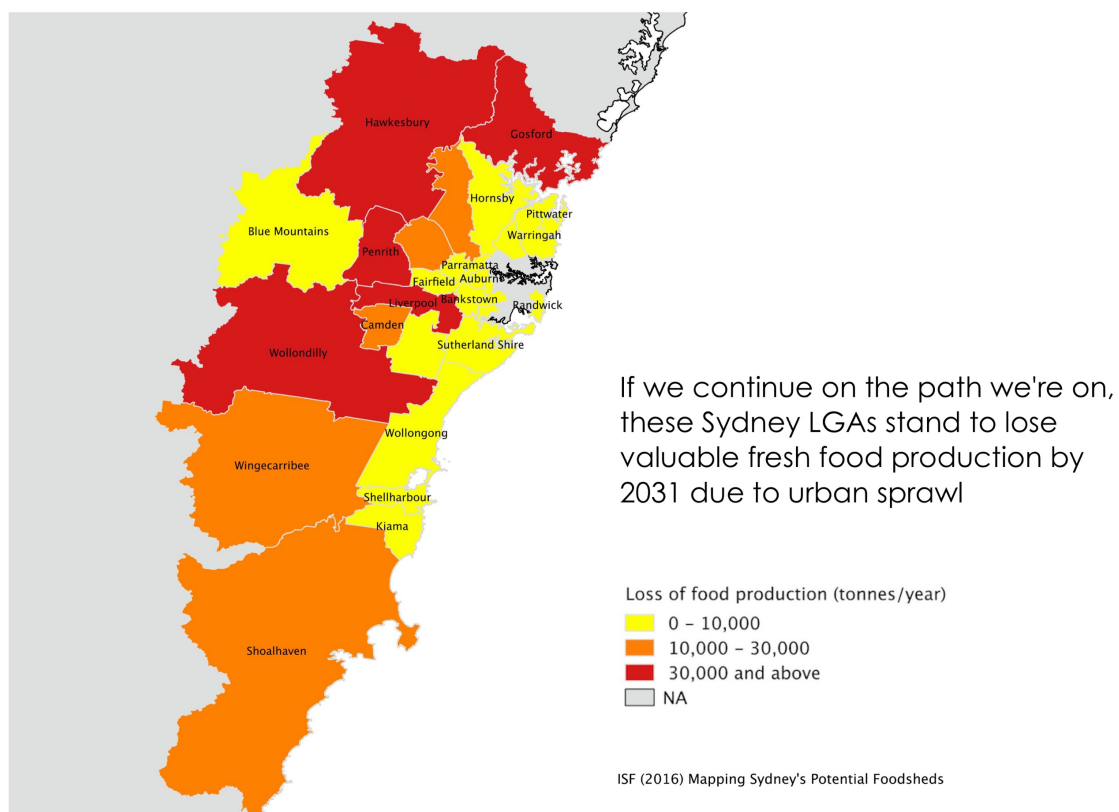


Figure 1. potential loss of food production by LGA under the '2031 urban sprawl' scenario.

<sup>41</sup> University of Technology Sydney. Planning Sydney's Food Futures. Accessed at: <https://www.uts.edu.au/research-and-teaching/our-research/institute-sustainable-futures/news/planning-sydneys-food-futures>

<sup>42</sup> Maps created by Sydney Food Futures (2015-2016): <https://www.uts.edu.au/research-and-teaching/our-research/institute-sustainable-futures/news/future-sydneys-food-bowl>

Accessed via: <http://www.sydneyfoodfutures.net/>

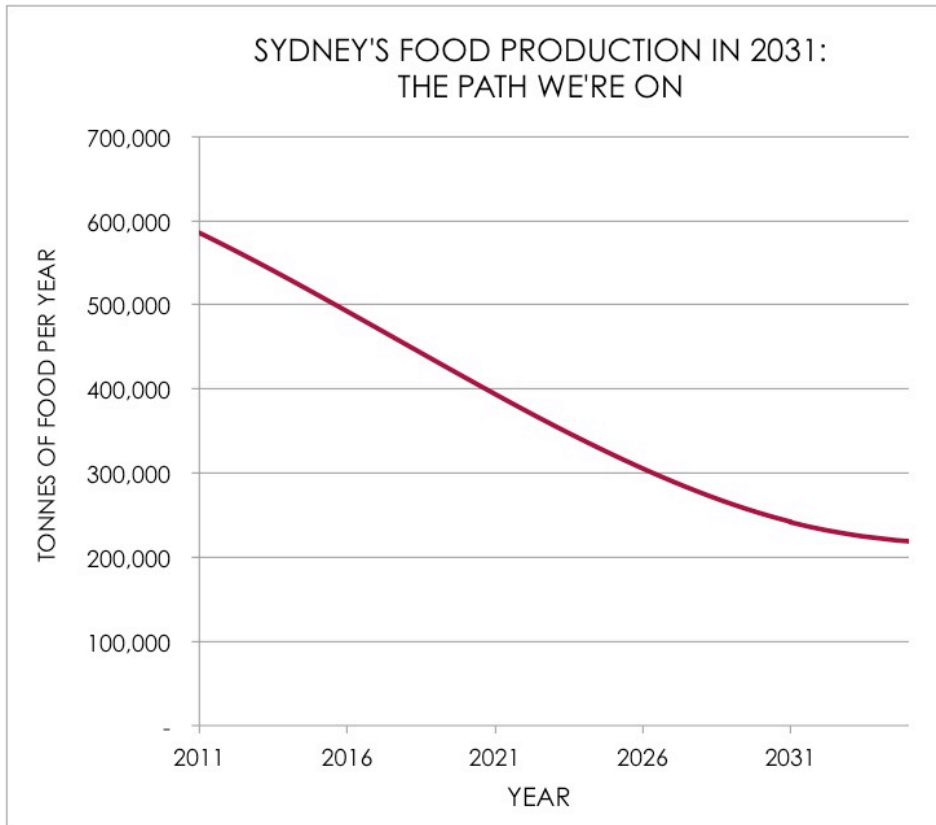


Figure 2: Permanent loss of food production under urban sprawl scenario.

Figure 2 shows that if the urban sprawl scenario continues uninterrupted, Sydney stands to lose approximately **60% of its total food production by 2031**. Vegetables, meat and eggs will be hardest hit: **92% of Sydney's current fresh vegetable production could be lost, 91% of meat and 89% of eggs** (Figure 3 below).

The project found that this is directly caused by the current planning system, which tends not to prioritise agriculture as a land use, meaning urban sprawl into peri-urban areas is permitted. The scenario was based on Sydney's metropolitan strategy, [A Plan for Growing Sydney](#), which allocates new population growth to each local government area, and, concentrates urban growth around North West and South West Growth Centres. Consequently, loss of fresh food production is greatest in Wollondilly, Liverpool, Penrith and Hawkesbury areas.

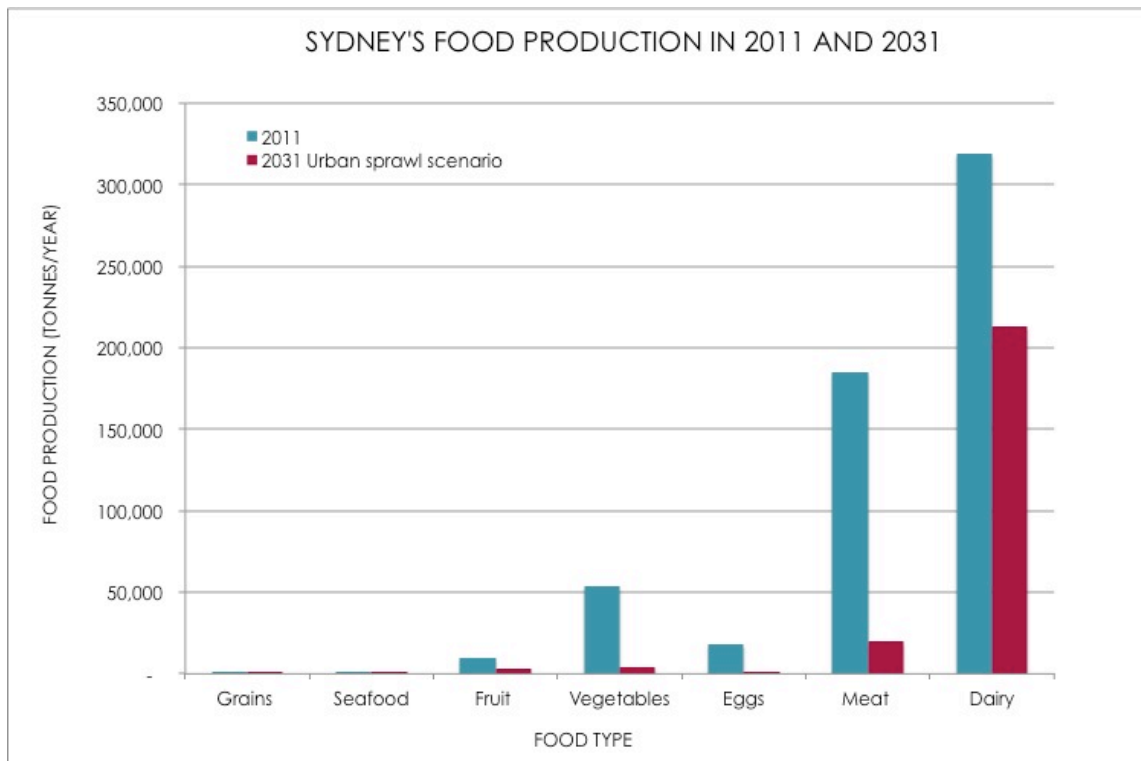


Figure 3: Food loss by food type under urban sprawl scenario.

As a consequence of this loss of agricultural land to urban expansion, coupled with 1.6 million extra mouths to feed, food production in the basin would only be able to feed **6%** of Sydney instead of the current **20%**, increasing Sydney's vulnerability to a range of [risks](#).

#### Changes to greater NSW area

In addition to the Sydney Metropolitan Strategy, the *Greater Sydney Commission Act 2015* was set up as a regime for regional and district planning in the greater proportion of NSW. A range of development codes were expanded and standardised, and regional plans have now been brought about as the Government fulfills its ambitions to “make it happen”.<sup>1</sup> Consideration for agricultural land needs to be core to the many changes to the NSW planning system.

The pressures of a growing population must be dealt with in the residential suite of zones, not in Primary Production, Rural Landscape, and Primary Production in Small Lots zones. 88% of NSW Farmers responding to our survey are located in RU1 and RU2 zones.

This is especially critical in the face of the negative impacts of climate change on Australia's capacity to grow food on the limited arable land available, most of which is concentrated around cities. If the Government continues to allow inappropriate encroachment and urban growth into viable farm land, future generations will become food insecure. A food secure and food sovereign future depends on appropriate planning controls that preserve farm land in perpetuity.

The NSW government should foster NSW's food security and strengthen its efforts to identify 'Food Sheds' by consulting with shires and taking into consideration research by UTS and SPUN in relation to peri-urban planning.

## Chemical Residue on Fresh Food

In a [new report](#) by the current Special Rapporteur on Food, Dr. Hilal Elver, written in collaboration with the Special Rapporteur on Toxics, a clearer account is provided of global pesticide use in agriculture and its impact on human rights. The report also canvasses the negative consequences that pesticide practices have had on human health, the environment and society, which are underreported. It also examined how to better protect farm workers, consumers and vulnerable groups, as well as what natural resources are necessary to support sustainable food systems.<sup>43</sup> The report stated that pesticides kill 200,000 people each year and that pesticides do not increase agriculture yields.

Although broad-spectrum pesticides are some of the cheapest chemicals in Australia costing only A\$1.50 per hectare to apply in grain crops, many farmers are concerned about the rising costs of these chemicals. More than A\$17 billion worth of crops grown in Australia annually is attributed to agricultural pesticides. This makes up 68% of the A\$26 billion industry, according to a [recent Deloitte report](#) commissioned by [CropLife Australia](#).<sup>44</sup> The increasing price of chemicals for farmers represents a major concern of the majority of the industry and a need to take significant step back from agricultural reliance on chemical inputs.

## Final remarks

Farmers, fishers, pastoralists, indigenous peoples, youth, women, urban dwellers, and farm workers call on the Committee to initiate beneficial changes to fresh food pricing and provide for participation of food producers in addition to governments in this process. In the past, small-scale farmers have increasingly become marginalised while the emphasis in agricultural development remained on exports and boosting production. The Committee should note the importance of inclusive, participatory decision making and the current demand on states to make the human right to food a reality.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> UN Special Rapporteur on human rights and toxics, Pesticides and the Right to Food, 7 March 2017, <<http://www.srtoxics.org/2017/03/pesticides-right-food/>>.

<sup>44</sup> The Conversation, <<https://theconversation.com/the-real-cost-of-pesticides-in-australias-food-boom-20757>> .

<sup>45</sup> Lucy Jarosz, 2014, Comparing food security and food sovereignty discourses, University of Washington, USA, Dialogues in Human Geography Vol. 4(2) 168-181.