



Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance Peoples' Food Plan

Biodiversity *is* biosecurity

Executive summary

Australian biosecurity strategies are limited to surveillance and control, completely ignoring prevention of the sources of biosecurity threats. Prevention does not begin at the border or the farm gate, it begins on the farm. Many emergent diseases such as novel porcine and avian influenza are born of intensive livestock production, a model that evolutionary epidemiologist Rob Wallace asserts produces 'food for flu' – because 'raising vast monocultures removes immunogenetic firebreaks that in more diverse populations cut off transmission booms'.

Imperial expansion and colonial 'development' are the original invasive systems that have led to a catastrophic loss of biodiversity and First Peoples' traditional biocultural knowledges and practices, and consequent increasing biosecurity threats. Any strategy that seeks to understand the growing threats to ecosystems, cultures, and economies must put First Peoples first to centre their right to self-determination and Country, and learn from traditional knowledges how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders propose to act.

So long as governments continue to scope biosecurity strategies with narrowly conceived categories of management of exotic and established exotic pests, weeds, and diseases, they fail to take a systems approach that acknowledges the complex interactions between species in ecosystems, and the history of colonial Invasion that brings us to the current vulnerable state of Australia's food and agriculture systems. The Peoples' Food Plan takes an evidence-based approach to analyse the well-understood role of industrial agriculture in loss of biodiversity and the consequent increase in biosecurity threats, with a particular focus on the most damaging impacts of intensive livestock production. It rejects the financialisation of nature and its role in furthering the same colonial capitalist systems that have caused the losses, and calls to shift One Health approaches upstream to the source of disease creation - sheds of immuno-compromised animals - making obvious the urgent need to reform production models away from monocultures to diversified agro-ecosystems. Finally, it includes recommendations for all Australians to consider the role of exotic domestic species and how we can reduce the devastating impacts on native species caused by household pets, horses, rabbits and more through responsible management at home and on farms. Case studies

showcase organisations and farms doing exemplary work to conserve and sustainably use rare and heritage seeds and breeds of animals to restore agricultural biodiversity to ensure healthier ecosystems and food security for the future.

Key peoples' policy recommendations*:

Local Governments:

- Prioritise Indigenous and other customary tenure rights. Given the critical role of areas governed by First Peoples in conserving biodiversity,¹ they need to participate in governance over protected areas and other community-based conservation measures.
- Reward and increase the area of ecosystems and areas managed under ecosystem-based approaches, relevant to the restoration and protection of ecosystem functions, particularly clean water provision and reduction of soil erosion.

State Governments:

- Legislate to conserve, reward and enhance the sustainable use of biodiversity in agricultural and other managed ecosystems across all levels of government, as means to increase social and ecological resilience, as well as the availability of healthy, nutritious and culturally adequate food to:
 - Support landowners' protection of significant ecosystems through stewardship or other effective conservation measures, or retaining and restoring native vegetation and connecting habitats. The restoration and connection of habitats should aim to maximise the genetic diversity and complexity of restored ecosystems²
 - Support systems that use native seeds, landrace varieties and breeds, as well as agroecological production, particularly those managed by smallholders, increasing the area dedicated to these systems; and
 - Decrease the areas dedicated to genetically uniform production.
- Provide financial and educational support for farmers to justly transition from high-risk monocultures of plants and animals to biodiverse and ecologically sustainable farming practices.

The Federal Government:

- Apply a rights based framework to Indigenous and smallholder food and land management, by fulfilling the obligations outlined in the Nagoya protocol, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants (UNDROP).

****Please refer to the Right to Food section of AFSA's Peoples' Food Plan for a full list of policy recommendations for local, state and federal government.***

Case studies

¹ Díaz et al., 2019

² Australia's Nature Hub, 2019

Rare Breeds Trust of Australia³

The Rare Breeds Trust Australia (RBTA) is a non-profit organisation founded by a group of animal breeders and conservationists. They work to promote and educate the public on the need to conserve livestock genetic diversity. Concerned with the threats to the genetic diversity of heritage breed livestock, the movement has been working for the last two decades to inform the general public about the unique breeds which need to be preserved for future generations. They believe that the genetic diversity offered by rare breeds is vital in maintaining the longevity, disease resistance, climate adaptability and structural soundness of a sustainable food system. As such their efforts include monitoring breed numbers; maintaining a website and blog informing readers on the qualities of individual breeds, the importance of livestock, and broader information on agricultural biodiversity; updating members on the latest livestock regulations for each state; and establishing a gene bank to preserve breed diversity into the future. Genetic and financial donations are welcome, with current genetic material including the Belmont Red, Tuli, Mandalong Special, British White and Timor Pony species.

Tuerong Farm⁴

Tuerong Farm is a 60ha peri-urban farm on the land of the Bunurong People, the Mornington Peninsula, VIC. Jason Cotter and Emma Hicks produce milling wheat, malting barley and beef. Their practices focus on soil health and input minimisation, alongside long-term bushland and riparian zone restoration. They are most renowned as a key driver behind the Australian local grains revival, operating an on-farm mill and bakery while increasing the diversity of non-commodity wheat available to bakers, chefs and home cooks. They have slowly amassed and trialled a large collection of heritage and other specialist grains, including via genebanks and collecting trips abroad. They have re-established grain production and processing on the Mornington Peninsula, and are now milling a diverse variety of hard and soft red wheats, white and purple wheats, maize and the ancient grain emmer. They are also working with newer cereal lines, such as perennial wheat and genetically diverse population wheats. They focus on cultivars and practices that prioritise flavour, nutrition, ease of digestion and sustainability. By revitalising the diversity of wheat and bread in the region, they aim to promote an agroecology and food system that is supportive of habitat, human health and biodiversity.

³ Rare Breeds Trust of Australia, n.d.

⁴ Tuerong Farm, n.d.