

**Submission
No 61**

FOOD PRODUCTION AND SUPPLY IN NSW

Organisation: Slow Food Australia

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Submission to the NSW Parliament Inquiry into Food Production and Supply

Submission from Slow Food Australia

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Improving Food Security and Equitable access to food & Preserving Land & Water Resources

The Global Slow Food Movement is advocating, educating, and preserving food biodiversity so as to achieve good clean and fair food for all. Based on this we believe that the preservation of small-scale agriculture on farmland that has access to water is essential to communities being food secure as climate change and future pandemics cut populations out of supply chains. This would mean that arable land along rivers and waterways is protected for food production and surrounding land is made available for light industries to value add .to prevent waste. Urban developments must be restricted from these lands if we are to maintain food security in local and regional communities.

We also believe that the farms need to be biodiverse and practice agrobiodiversity so as to be resilient to the changes to climate unpredictability. Even farms that are large scale and practice monoculture currently, would need to be diversified so as to able to survive and adapt to climate change and continue to be viable.

Reducing Food Waste and Destruction

Currently, the farm production system is beholden to agents in the supply chain that determines how much and when and at what price the produce will be subjected to. In this system, large quantities of produce gets wasted or ploughed into the ground due to agents being able to source from any part of the country or globally and move product around due to the ease of transport and refrigeration. In this scenario, local food fresh food is not always available to the local community and is wasted.

We strongly believe regular Markets in permanent structures in each city council area would help to develop the local food systems by enabling farmers to sell their biodiverse crops, maintain localised seed gene pools and support wide ranging artisan value added products.

We know from direct experience that the local Markets especially the Earth Market in Maitland has been an incubator for further agricultural businesses to start up, young people taking up farming as a viable career choice, on-farm education for local schools programs, marketing opportunities with short supply chains created to sell farm produce direct to customer, and to restaurant & chefs, start-up bee keeping and honey production, free range egg production and value added products from locally available farm produce converting excess to small scale industry.

Developing Technologies to bring food production into the Cities.

In recent years, horticulture education has declined in the local education system. We believe that this needs to be reinstated and that an appropriate pathway to developing skills and education in management, marketing, sustainable operations management, and biodiversity education to be introduced to these courses. We believe that knowledge of farmers need to be valued and matched with academic studies to value experience and skill with dual learning paths for the benefit of everyone in the food system.

We believe that creating opportunities for consumers, manufacturers, and value add-artisans to become co-producers, where the buyer in the city is connected to the farm and the farmer. The development of the technologies that connect the farmers to the buyers in the city need to be resourced so as to make it accessible and user friendly for all participants. Currently, many organisations offer this type of connection but at a smaller scale due to limitations of funding for developing larger scale technologies. Funding from Government would go a long way to creating the virtual marketplace that would bring the farm to the city and connecting people to where the produce is. This in turn would reduce food waste as seasonal gluts in food production can be known and accessed. Eg: Current glut of tomatoes in the lower hunter is not known by anyone unless the media writes a story!

Further, processing plants for dairy, meat, fresh food, and fibre need to be regionalised so that transport and fuel costs are reduced. These can be high technology facilities that require skill sets and innovation from the regional universities.

Regional Labelling identification e.g.: “from the Hunter valley” to provide context and terrior will help to give local food a geographic identity. This will encourage regional resources to be combined as a pathway to creating export markets that appeal to a set of credentials. For example, grass fed beef from the Hunter Valley.

Limiting the impact of Food Production has on the environment including overfishing

Food education is the key to understanding the sustainable food production system. Education in schools is the key to get the messages of Eating less meat, eating locally caught species of fish, eating more fruit and vegetables, not wasting food, not over-purchasing garments, eating seasonally, eating locally grown food, and making the connection between food production and natural resource depletion. One of the key reforms need to be in teaching people to cook their own food instead on relying on the less nutritious fast food, which while a convenience is creating serious health issues in adults and children.

Consideration of Indigenous Food and Land Management

Native food forests in local communities on existing parks and lands makes it more accessible to members of the communities to learn and understand the value of this native resource. It is a way of creating a pathway to acceptance of the valuable food source that is climate adaptable, is beneficial to the environment and is a way of creating food security. Government grants given to local land managers and to community organisations go a long way to providing the resources to create networks of these Native Food Forests.

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