

**Submission
No 65**

FOOD PRODUCTION AND SUPPLY IN NSW

Organisation: Food Fairness Illawarra

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23 February 2022

Mr AH Greenwich
Chair, Legislative Assembly Committee on Environment and Planning
NSW Parliament
6 Macquarie St
Sydney, NSW 2000

Dear Mr Greenwich,

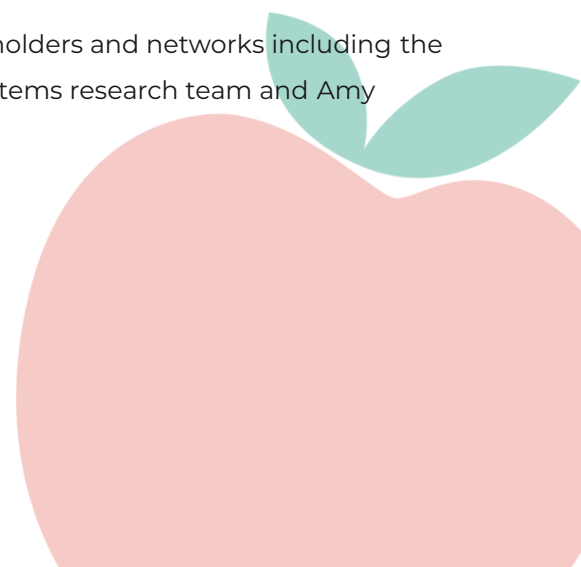
Re.: Submission to the Inquiry into Food Production and Supply in NSW

Thank you for inviting submissions to the Inquiry into Food Production and Supply in NSW, which represents a critical opportunity to future-proof equitable access to food and sustainable food production in NSW.

I am making this submission on behalf of Food Fairness Illawarra, a community coalition that has worked together since 2005 to make healthy and sustainable food affordable and accessible for all. FFI is guided by representatives from six key organisations (Healthy Cities Illawarra, Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District, Wollongong City Council, Shellharbour City Council, Kiama Municipal Council and the University of Wollongong) and has a wider network of over 1000 individuals, community groups, charities and non-government organisations. All who recognise the need for collaboration between community, industry, and governments to unlock fairer food solutions.

Parts of this submission were developed together with other stakeholders and networks including the Food Governance Node, the local government and healthy food systems research team and Amy Carrad, food systems researcher.

In response to the terms of reference:



No 11. Consideration of Indigenous food and land management practices.

FFI puts their support behind any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples or organisations (and their genuine non-Indigenous allies) who are relevant to and working in any of the sectors associated with this Inquiry.

We cannot speak on their behalf but believe that the Inquiry should prioritise Indigenous food systems, food sovereignty and voices to be at the forefront of any discussions regarding food systems. This is consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

In consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, NSW should develop and implement legislation and related strategies that protect the intellectual property of First Nations People and their knowledge of bush foods from non-Indigenous appropriation and economic gain.

1. Improving food security and equitable access to food.

Although social inequalities have existed in our food system prior to COVID-19, the social and economic impact of this crisis have only exacerbated these inequalities. We therefore support the fundamental conceptual points raised by associates who have provided separate submissions:

- Food sovereignty is embedded as the goal of all policies, projects and initiatives.
- Right to food – equity and social justice at the forefront of decisions and policymaking. State government and local governments to officially recognise and act on their responsibility to implement the 'Right to Food' and human-rights based policies.
- The response to food insecurity should not be one dominated by emergency food relief/food charity, as it currently stands. We must have an approach that has the dignity of all people at heart and allows them to grow their own food as well as obtain it by socially and economically acceptable means, *not* rely on charitable handouts coming from surplus food offloaded by the major supermarkets. The charitable model should be only a short-term solution for people in crisis.
- Food security is not only a matter of quantity. Any discussion of food security must also have nutritional quality and cultural appropriateness at its heart.

The NSW government should facilitate and invest in a NSW Food Security Council that creates a network of both cross-governmental and non-government organisations to oversee and implement a coordinated approach to improving individual and household food security.

Sustained funding must be available for local governments and non-government organisations to develop place-based solutions that will improve access to healthy, affordable food for all. This includes adequately resourcing community gardens and farmers' markets (e.g., Paid coordinators) to increase local food production, food security and community resilience to food system shocks. Responses to food security must be co-designed with people who have lived experience of food insecurity.

We need better routine monitoring of food security and related indicators (e.g., fresh/healthy food pricing). Food consumption, food insecurity, food accessibility and food affordability data are outdated and inadequate. The NSW government must commit to rigorous monitoring and research to understand the extent of the problem and to assess progress, including conduct of qualitative studies.

2. Reducing food waste and destruction.

We are producing and wasting food in an unsustainable fashion. One of the primary methods of 'addressing' this issue at present is a reliance on an underfunded and under-resourced food rescue and food charity sector. While we must reduce food waste and food losses. Progress in this respect must be matched by advanced progress on household food insecurity, so that those who are currently reliant on food charity are able to purchase their own food with dignity. Supplies through food charities should only be a solution when individuals are in crisis.

In the inevitable situation that some level of food waste will occur, local governments must be supported to develop infrastructure to process organic waste both from households and commercial premises.

The NSW government must also include strategies that reduce the amount of single-use packaging, particularly plastics, that are used for foods and beverages.

3. Developing technologies to bring food production into cities.

Food production in cities does not need to take an agri-tech design, or not completely. There are already mechanisms at our disposal that draw on long-standing agroecological knowledge and practices, and social changes, rather than novel technology:

- There needs to be mapping and preservation of suitable land. This needs to be done urgently so that high quality land is not handed over to irreversible residential and/or industrial destruction/development.
- Changes to state planning schemes and Local Environmental Plans (at local government level) and regulation that empower local governments and planners to put urban agriculture ahead of other development. Introduce appropriate SEPP's for Councils to adopt urban agriculture policies and support new and existing activities.
- This land needs to be made easily and financially accessible for people and groups who want to grow food. Practical support and training should be available to these groups to ensure success and share learnings.
- Funding – there needs to be dedicated streams of funding for urban agriculture, specifically.
- Education/professional development of planners so they understand urban agriculture (and that it is not only green walls and roofs, or conducted in shipping containers).

4. Preserving productive land and water resources.

In recent decades there has been a loss of agricultural land, due to land degradation, conservation protection and encroachment of housing and other development. This potentially reduces the availability of fresh foods in close proximity to population centres.

Increasing sustainable food production near population centres means an increased opportunity for fresh food production and consumption, local jobs, reduced transport costs and a more diverse food production network resilient to potential shocks.

Protecting agricultural land for food growing requires land use planning and consistent enforcement such as enforcing existing State Significant Farmland mapping constraints. It is also important that biofuel production does not impinge on the availability of land for food production.

Actions to reduce risks and enhance market opportunities for small-scale agricultural producers can foster uptake and maximise the local production of communities' food needs.

The NSW Government must also ensure that productive land and water resources are protected from chemical and other contaminants.

5. Managing the impact of climate change

6. Limiting the impact food production has on the environment, including overfishing.

7. Addressing complex challenges to food production including declining pollinating species and productive fertilisers.

Terms of reference 5, 6, and 7 from this Inquiry are inextricably linked and cannot be addressed in siloes. Decision-making and action on environmental sustainability connected with food systems should draw on Indigenous knowledges and agroecological principles. The relationship between food systems and climate change is a reciprocal one and must be explicitly acknowledged and addressed as such.

The IPCC report identifies the production and consumption of local, sustainably produced food as one of the strategies to significantly reduce GHG emissions and mitigate climate change. As a coalition we understand the importance of a resilient local food system for both the health and wellbeing of the local community.

8. Consideration of workforce challenges and skills development.

Support initiatives and implement financial incentives programs that provide land for farming (including urban agriculture) at affordable prices, particularly to benefit young people wishing to enter farming.

9. Development and growth of the food industry (raw or processed) as an export.

Agricultural exports are not a proxy for local food security, therefore FFI disagrees that development of exports should be a focus of the NSW (and indeed Australian) food system.

The globalised food system is the cause of many environmental, animal welfare, and farmer income problems.

10. Implications for quality control and labelling of processed/manufactured food.

Eaters should be able to access and interpret as much information as possible about their food. This requires: a) for information to be available, including but not limited to origin, additives/chemical inputs/GMO, nutritional properties; and b) educational campaigns that enhance individuals' food literacy and ability to understand the information presented on food labelling and marketing.

As a conclusion, Food Fairness Illawarra is keen to see the NSW Government adopt the robust recommendations proposed in the Consensus Statement on Towards a Healthy, Regenerative and Equitable Food System in Victoria.

Drawing on this document, we propose the following reforms to state-level law, policy, and funding in NSW:

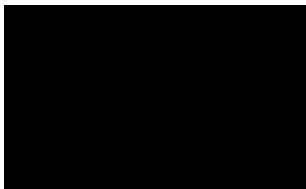
- The NSW Government should follow the examples of Victoria, South Australia, and Western Australia in establishing a public health legislative framework that sets goals and targets at the state level and requires all NSW councils to develop a Public Health and Wellbeing Plan that is consistent with state-level public health plans and legislation, and which explicitly sets targets and requires action on key food system priorities.
- The Government should legislate on climate change (as Victoria has done), and in doing so, make clear the link between climate change and health. The recommended NSW local government Public Health and Wellbeing Plans should require councils to act on both climate change and health, with an explicit focus on food systems.
- NSW (along with other Australian states) needs to urgently amend its planning framework, including state planning legislation, to address council's lack of power to approve or refuse food outlet types based on the healthiness of the food sold, and thus stem the phenomenon of 'food swamps' (geographical areas characterised by a high density of unhealthy food outlets, such as fast-food restaurants, and a relatively low number of stores selling healthy options, such as supermarkets)
- Reforms to planning legislation and state planning instruments should also recognise and provide for urban agriculture, which could be supported by additional measures such as auditing and identifying suitable public land and creating pathways to facilitate access (e.g., rates discounts), developing dedicated grant streams for community and commercial operators, establishing a Strategy and Advisory group to build capacity across local and state government, and establishing new research institutes to conduct training and research.

- NSW needs to develop a state-wide, integrated, and comprehensive Food System and Food Security plan that sets objectives and targets at the state level (and evaluates progress against these objectives and targets), and which empowers local governments and communities to set local objectives and targets on priority food system issues, and then work toward their achievement. This plan (and other state government activities on food systems) should be implemented and overseen by a new, whole-of-government Food Systems Committee, and be accompanied by dedicated, significant funding for local government food system policies and programs.

Thank you again for this opportunity, we look forward to seeing the outcomes of this inquiry.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to please contact me on [REDACTED]

Yours faithfully,



Berbel Franse

Health Promotion Officer, Healthy Cities Illawarra

Secretariat for Food Fairness Illawarra

