



Coffs Coast

Local Food Alliance

promoting resilient communities through local food

www.coffscoastlocalfood.com.au

Coffs Coast Local Food Framework *2010 - 2020*

JULY 2010



NSW
Environmental
TRUST

This project has been assisted by the NSW
Government through its Environmental Trust

Executive Summary

The *Coffs Coast Local Food Alliance* is one of many initiatives around New South Wales, Australia and internationally in which people from diverse points in the food system have come together to discuss the necessity for change. We believe that food and agriculture must be reconceptualised as a vital social and economic system in its own right. We aim to plan for change and to implement it. This Framework constitutes an essential part of this process.



The vision we have is of the Coffs Coast region as a showcase sustainable local food economy that supports and sustains healthy, connected, strong and resilient communities who actively care for each other and their environment.

Our mission is to promote and support the development of a strong local food economy based on sustainable agricultural practices so that all residents of the Coffs Coast have equitable access to affordable, fresh, healthy food into the future.

Within this document we explore what the drivers for change are, and some of the scenarios that can reasonably be anticipated depending on various levels of action or inaction. We look to our own food system as it currently stands, based on our existing levels of knowledge. We describe, based on the perceptions of food system workers and community members, its existing strengths and weaknesses. Having regard to practice elsewhere, we identify key gaps in our local and regional food system.

This Framework identifies eight strategic areas for priority action:

- **Policy changes;**
- **Food alliances;**
- **Leadership development;**
- **Nurturing knowledge and skills;**
- **New farming and food supply chain practices;**
- **Improved infrastructure for local producers;**
- **Community education and awareness-raising; and**
- **Strengthening community actions.**



Recognising that a change in thinking and attitudes is the key to changes in practice, at this early stage we are concentrating our efforts on **education and awareness-raising**. The NSW Environmental Trust-funded Local Food Futures Project addresses this need through several of its components. These include: the development and promotion of this Framework; the creation and distribution of a local seasonal calendar and food directory; showcasing the Coffs Coast Local Food Film Festival in three venues across the region; and developing an increased network of backyard vegetable gardens. Other projects that are high on the priority list - such as a Food Systems Assessment and the resourcing of a Local Food/Small Farms Hub - will require additional resourcing and network-building.

We also want to put in place practical and visible infrastructure and ongoing educational initiatives that can become lasting centres for social learning and community building. This is why the establishment of community gardens is the centrepiece of the Local Food Futures Project.



As our regional 'Community of Interest' demonstrates, we are seeking to maintain an open dialogue with representatives from numerous institutions and businesses. We are constantly reaching out to other groups and institutions, seeking to expand and strengthen our Alliance and develop new partnerships. We have established firm links with the Sydney Food Fairness Alliance and the Adelaide 'Plains to Plate' convergence. We are also part of a national movement to establish Community-Shared Agriculture social enterprises, based on the Food Connect model pioneered by Robert Pekin and his colleagues in Brisbane.

Through the process of engagement used to develop this Framework, we have observed the desire for change as well as the will and capacity locally to bring it about. Harnessing these energies to construct a resilient and just local food system is the contribution we can make for this and future generations. We invite you to join us.



About this Document

What is the Purpose of the Framework?

The Coffs Coast Local Food Framework aims to support the development of a sustainable local food economy for our region.

The development of the framework aims to:

- generate awareness about the issues surrounding local food
- create interest in, and enthusiasm for, participation
- identify a 'road map' for action
- show commitment from Local Government, State agencies and Community groups
- allow for other key stakeholders to identify how they might contribute, and
- build partnerships and networks around our mission and objectives

Who is our target audience?

The audiences we considered when developing the Framework cover a wide spectrum. This is an indication of the inter-connectedness of the issues and the whole of community approach required to create a sustainable local food economy.

We hope the following audiences will consider the role they play in creating a future for Coffs Coast Local Food:

- Community groups
- Local farmers, growers and their representative organisations
- Education and training organisations
- Funding bodies
- Government agencies (State, National)
- Individual community members
- Local businesses – food wholesalers, retailers, restaurants and cafes
- Local Councils (Councillors and staff)
- Non-Government organisations
- Organisations in the food supply chain

The Coffs Coast Local Food Alliance

What is the Coffs Coast Local Food Alliance?

In response to the growing pressures of climate change, peak-oil and other emerging challenges for local, national and global food systems, a group of like-minded people first met in mid-2008 to discuss how to bring more fresh local produce to more peoples' plates in the Coffs Coast area. Having regard to processes underway elsewhere in NSW, Australia and internationally, this group identified an opportunity to constitute a Local Food Alliance (LFA) that could articulate pathways for engagement and action with the aim of building a strong, sustainable and resilient local food system. With support from the Urban Sustainability Programme of the NSW Environmental Trust, a *Steering Group* was formed with representatives from:

- Bellingen Community Gardens Association (BCGA)
- Bellingen Shire Council (BSC)
- Bellingen Landcare (BL)
- Coffs Harbour City Council (CHCC)
- Coffs Harbour Regional Landcare (CHRL)
- Coffs Region Community Gardens Association (CRCGA)
- Coffs Region Organic Producers Organisation (CROPO)
- North Coast Area Health Service (NCAHS)

Who developed this framework?

In developing this Framework, the *LFA Steering Group* engaged a wide range of stakeholders through a variety of processes:

- Food Futures Forums were held in Coffs Harbour and Bellingen in March 2009.
- The draft Framework was released for public distribution in October 2009.
- An online survey was open to the public as a way of collecting feedback .
- From February to May 2010, a series of presentations about the Framework and its strategic areas for action were made to key stakeholders, including NSW TAFE Sustainability Educators, local farmers and growers including the Coffs Harbour branch of the NSW Farmers Association and the Coffs Harbour Growers Market, and health and nutrition professionals from NCAHS. Over 100 copies of the Framework were distributed at these presentations.

Overall, the response to the vision and need for strategic action to work towards a strong, sustainable and resilient local food economy has been overwhelmingly positive. The results of all these forms of consultation have been incorporated into the current Framework.

While this document is now being presented in its 'final' version, the Framework is intended to be a dynamically 'living' document whose success will be determined by the participation of stakeholders in constructing our region's food system. Ultimately this includes everyone who lives and works in the Coffs Coast. We expect this participation to increase and expand as the momentum and commitment to a regional food economy strengthens.

What is Our Vision?

The Coffs Coast region has a showcase sustainable local food economy that supports and sustains healthy, connected, strong and resilient communities who actively care for each other and their environment.

What is Our Mission?

We will promote and support the development of a strong local food economy based on sustainable agricultural practices so that all residents of the Coffs Coast have equitable access to affordable, fresh, healthy food into the future. We will value and utilise local knowledge.

What are Our Principles?

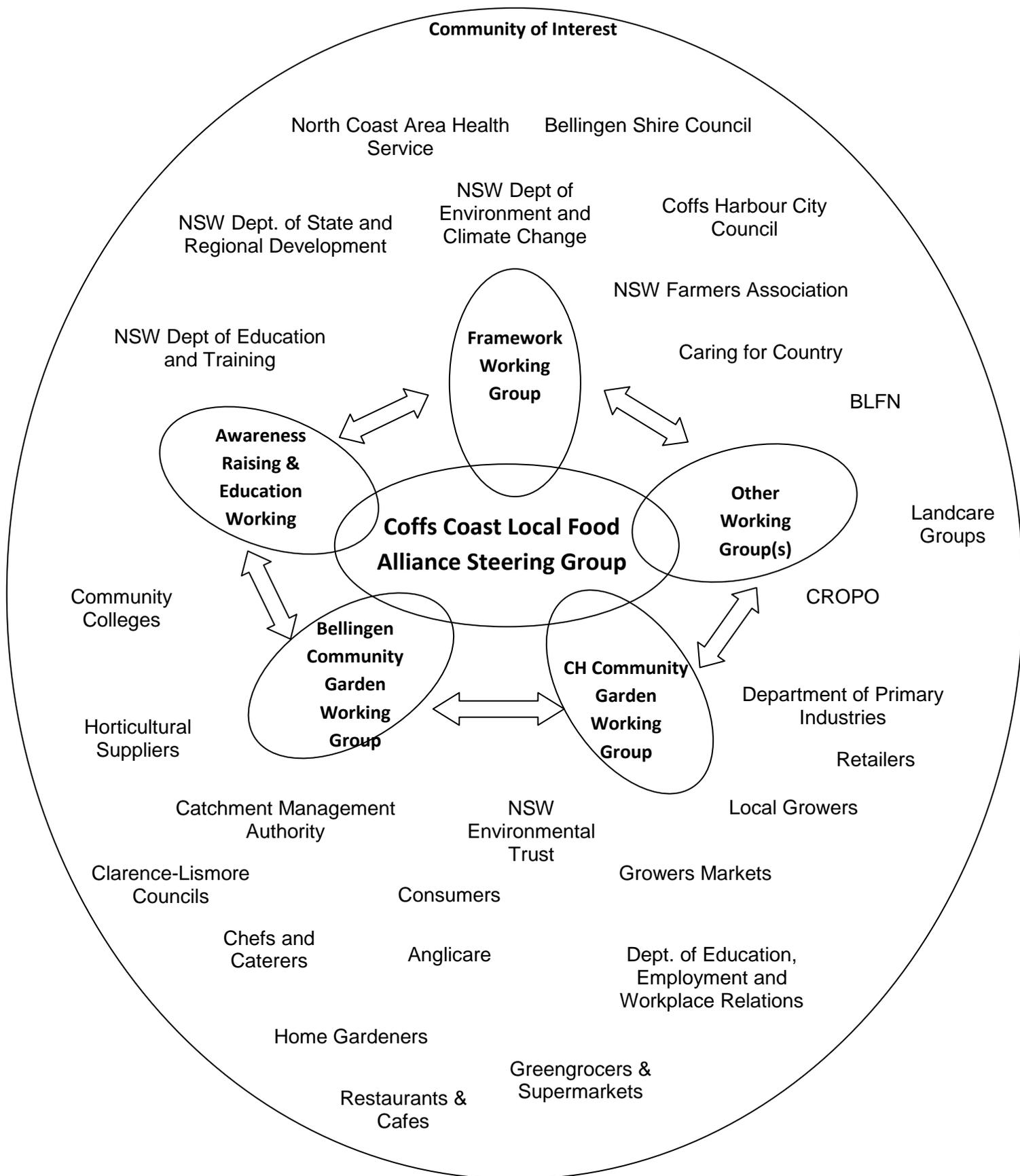
- We believe in the rights of all people to have access to affordable, fresh and healthy food
- We believe that access to fresh local food is a way of improving the health and wellbeing of communities
- We believe that a strong local food economy supports sustainable livelihoods through job and wealth creation within the community
- We support sustainable agricultural practices as being paramount to the long-term protection of our environment and health
- We believe that reconnecting ourselves with our food helps to reconnect ourselves to the environment and to each other and moves us towards a more sustainable future
- We value diversity, creativity and innovation in what we do
- We support grass roots movements that share our vision
- We value and utilize local knowledge
- We believe in the principles of social justice, equality and sustainability

Our Objectives

- To undertake education and awareness raising activities that promote actions by both consumers and producers around local food systems
- To build partnerships and network with other local, national and international organisations that have similar missions and objectives, in order to build and share knowledge and information
- To undertake and support grass roots initiatives that further our vision and mission
- To seek ongoing funding for achievement of our mission
- To develop a resource and information base around local food
- To undertake research into best practice in local food economies

What is Our Structure?

The Coffs Coast Local Food Alliance is made up of a *Steering Group* to drive framework development and initiate actions as well as members of the *Community of Interest* who are interested in supporting the vision. *Working Groups* will be formed and disbanded as required to deliver projects and actions identified through the Framework.



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Why do we need a local food system?

Drivers for Change

There are a number of significant drivers for change in the Coffs Coast local food system. Whilst they represent challenges we must face now and in the future, they also indicate potential opportunities to capitalise on if we adapt and prepare ourselves adequately.

Securing Dignified Livelihoods

Consumers have become accustomed to very cheap food, the price of which does not reflect the true costs associated with its production. Due to the market share and bargaining power of the two major supermarkets, the majority of food sold in Australia does not allow a sufficient return to food producers' pockets to provide for an adequate 'repairs and maintenance' or reinvestment budget¹.

Moreover, as the costs of production in conventional agriculture have increased with rising prices of inputs and as the market share of the two big supermarket chains has grown, farmers and growers find themselves in a 'cost-price squeeze' that makes it difficult to earn a dignified living from the land without incurring very substantial debt and/or relying heavily on off-farm income². The relentless logic of economies of scale means that the most profitable farms are also the largest broadacre farms which are 'unambiguously internationally competitive'.³ This is a major reason why the numbers of farmers nationally has declined by over 25% in the last 25 years, while the average farm size has increased.⁴

However in our region, geographical and demographic factors mean that our challenge is not so much to struggle with the implications of a shrinking number of larger farms, but rather how to ensure that a relatively large number of small farms can be viable.

The Coffs Coast has many new landholders coming to the region seeking alternative lifestyles; with minimal experience in farm management, many take up small land holdings. This brings its own set of challenges and opportunities to make these ventures viable in the long-term. **However, having regard to the factors mentioned below, it is likely that these smaller-scale farms will represent the most viable future for sustainable and resilient farming.**

'The key issue for farmers [in the Coffs Coast] is financial – how do we make small farms financially viable? 90% of the farmers on this coast depend on off-farm income in order to get by, and many are in debt. Many farmers are also struggling under the burdens of environmental pressures, with many new regulations coming from the state and the councils. I see a lot of potential in the CSA [community-shared agriculture] model.'

Michael Burt, NSW Farmers Association

Climate Change

Climate change will have significant ramifications for agricultural production in the future, with predicted strong warming and drying trends, more variable and extreme weather conditions and less reliable seasons. The Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics has concluded that Australia is one of the countries that will be most affected by climate change, and that agriculture will be among the most affected sectors of the Australian economy⁵. The trends are already evident with the prolonged drought in South-Eastern Australia⁶.

There are two key ways of responding to climate change: adapting to the unavoidable changes; and trying to reduce the severity of their impacts through mitigation measures, which include emissions abatement and sequestration. The Agriculture sector has a significant role to play in both of these areas.

Mitigation choices that landowners can make include the adoption of agro-ecological principles such as farm multi-functionality, polycultures and forest conservation. These measures help preserve soil carbon levels, enrich micro-organic soil life and humus, and enhance biodiversity⁷.

On farm adaptation measures will also be required together with systemic changes in policies, infrastructure, education and training, research and innovation across the whole food supply chain.

Environment

Coffs Coast has many unique aquatic and terrestrial environments making it a region of high biodiversity. Key threats to the very biodiversity that attract visitors and residents to the region are habitat loss and fragmentation due to pressures from urban development, infrastructure and agriculture.

Farming practices – including clearing of land, cultivation, irrigation, fertilisation and cropping - impact on the ecological systems in which they operate. Some land management practices of our farmers can also indirectly impact on the environment in a range of other ways including the introduction of pests and weeds, downstream impacts of agricultural water run-off and soil loss and degradation.

‘Being able to produce well also means understanding the soils and the ecosystems, working with the environment, not against it. There are good courses on soils and biological farming, e.g. TAFE courses. The Centre for Small-Scale Farming would be a good idea if it could make these sorts of courses more widely available. There are some initiatives towards holistic farm management; DPI has run a good course of farming for climate change.’

Dale, Goat & Pig Farmer, Bowraville

Water

Irrigated and dry-land agriculture is by far the biggest consumer of fresh water in Australia, accounting for nearly two-thirds of total consumption of just under 19,000 gigitalitres⁸. Because of the amount of water required to produce our food, about half of total household water use is through the food we consume, compared to about 11% used directly in washing, cleaning and gardens.

In coming decades, the Coffs Coast’s water security may be placed under pressure due to the greater frequency of weather extremes. While much of Australia is predicted to experience an increased incidence of drought, the Coffs Coast is likely to receive increased rainfall. **On the one hand, this may create significant opportunities in terms of food and agricultural production for the region, while on the other, more extreme weather events are predicted, including a higher frequency of extreme flooding events and storms⁹.** This would pose considerable challenges for the region's farmers.

Peak Oil and Energy

Upward pressure on fuel pricing in Australia is being driven by diminishing world oil reserves, increasing demand, and the emergence of carbon pricing¹⁰. Many experts predict that there will be increasing frequency and severity of price spikes, and long term escalation in costs of fuel and derivatives of crude oil¹¹. The introduction of some form of mitigation measures to tackle climate change – whether it occurs in the form of an emissions trading system, a carbon tax or some other form of carbon pricing or rationing¹² scheme, will further increase energy prices.

The impacts of such measures on food production and farming will inevitably be an increase in the cost of food for consumers as farmers deal with higher prices of fuel, nutrients, transport and the many other fossil fuel-based inputs on which the food system currently depends¹³. In such a scenario, farming systems that are less dependent on high levels of external inputs of diesel and synthetic fertilisers will become relatively more competitive¹⁴.

As energy pressures lead to food price increases, especially where food has had to travel long distances, there will be multiple new opportunities for Coffs Coast food producers to play an increasingly important role in the region's food economy.

World Food Demands

The world's population is now approaching 7 billion and is estimated to climb to between 9 and 10 billion around the middle of the 21st century before stabilising and beginning to fall slightly, according to estimates from the United Nations¹⁵. **Everybody needs to be able to feed themselves, but in ways that are both ecologically sustainable and which uphold human dignity and health. With over 1 billion people currently suffering from malnutrition, and equal or greater numbers experiencing diminished enjoyment of life through being overweight or obese, it is beyond any doubt that the current world food system is failing to meet these basic objectives¹⁶.**

Climate change, resource constraints and the ecologically-destructive impacts of large-scale export-oriented agriculture heavily dependent on fossil fuel and chemical inputs present new challenges. Taken together, all this means that the viability of conventional agricultural methods to boost production may be severely reduced in the coming period. The alternative proposal of the widespread commercialisation of genetically-modified crops has provoked considerable concern and opposition amongst large numbers of the general public and the scientific community¹⁷. Further, since this technology still makes farmers dependent on numerous external inputs, such as expensive patented seed and increased applications of chemical fertilisers, there are serious doubts over its viability as an adequate model for a strong, sustainable and resilient local food economy¹⁸.

Food Miles studies have demonstrated the linkages with climate change mitigation measures in relation to transportation.

"The total distance for all transportation of a [typical weekly] food basket is 70,803 km, equivalent to travelling nearly twice around the circumference of the Earth, or travelling around Australia's coastline three times....If all the food trucks were transporting all food items on the same day, the emissions from this one day of transportation (16,989 t CO²), is equivalent to 4,247 cars driving for one year."

Sophie Gaballa and Asha Bee Abraham, Food Miles in Australia: A preliminary study of Melbourne, Victoria (CERES, 2007).

'Reliance on resource-extractive industrial agriculture is unsustainable, particularly in the face of worsening climate, energy and water crises; expensive short-term technical fixes – including transgenic crops – do not adequately address the complex challenges of the agricultural sector and often exacerbate social and environmental harms.'

World Agriculture Report, UNEDP, UNFAO, and the World Bank.

Health

For centuries we have been slowly increasing the average life-span, but we appear now to have reached a peak in the improvement of human health. Obesity is a major contributor to reduced quality of life and it is widely accepted that the biggest factors in the rapidly rising levels of obesity (and associated chronic diseases) are diet and nutrition.

The issue here is not one of increased or more sustainable agricultural production, but rather of over-consumption of the wrong sorts of foods. Tackling obesity will require multiple actions such as:

- sustained education to enable people to re-learn the basic components of a healthy diet and how to prepare tasty, nutritious meals¹⁹;
- increased availability of fresh and affordable nutritious produce;
- fostering a new culture where the consumption of such produce becomes the norm;
- acceptance of the food system as being central in the front line of preventative health care²⁰.

The National Preventative Health TaskForce recommended state and federal governments to:

‘Examine and develop systems and subsidies that increase the availability of high-quality fresh food for regional and remote areas, focusing on regional and remote transportation, and increasing the production of high-quality, locally-grown fresh foods that are available to the local community.’

National Preventative Health TaskForce, Technical Paper 1: Obesity in Australia: a need for urgent action. pp113-4.

Overall, reversing the trend of a decrease in consumption of fresh whole foods, fruit and vegetables is key, along with reducing our average red meat consumption²¹. This is especially important for indigenous and low-income Australians, as well as those living in regional and remote rural areas, who are disproportionately affected by obesity-related diseases.

Labour

Our farming populations are in decline as people move off the farm in search of alternative income, or as the farming land is turned into hobby farms or areas of rural residential properties. All around the globe the pressures on the agricultural workforce are increasing. Australia’s ageing population also brings other issues, such as more of the workforce reaching retirement age, loss of skills and the agricultural lifestyle not being attractive for our youth. As at 2009, the average age of the Australian farmer is 58, with small numbers of young farmers wanting to enter the sector²². **There is a need to find ways in which to better**

support and value the current generation of farmers and farmworkers, as well as create incentives and provide support mechanisms (such as thriving local markets) for the next generation of farmers and horticulturalists.

In order for the Coffs Coast to respond to the opportunities presented by the changing external landscape it is essential for a nurturing of knowledge and skills in the agricultural sector.

‘Strengthening the human and ecological resilience of agricultural systems improves our capacity to respond to changing environmental and social stresses. Indigenous knowledge and community-based innovations are an invaluable part of the solution.’

World Agricultural Report, UNEDP, UNFAO, and the World Bank.

Land Use

The Mid North Coast's population growth is predicted to continue to increase in the foreseeable future which means we will need to house approximately an extra 100,000 people by 2031²³. This is putting increased pressure on our previously rural landscape to become residential. Whilst this potential conflict may be eased by good land use planning and urban consolidation to stop the encroachment, there will be increasing tension over land use. **There is a growing need to protect our agricultural lands which will be required more and more into the future.**

Scenarios and Implications

The question remains: what effect will these pressures have on our local food system and indeed the global food supply chain? With so many influencing factors and variables it is impossible for anyone to predict with certainty, but what can be presented is a range of scenarios that we may reasonably expect to play out. In this way we can review the potential scenarios and see which strategies will assist us in dealing with them. The diagram on page 7 illustrates four scenarios which the UK's Royal Institute of International Affairs used to generate debate and test the UK food systems' responses to possible changes. It is intended to be illustrative as opposed to predictive, with the scenarios drawn from observable trends in global food demand and supply rather than econometric models.

Our Response – How do we understand the nature of the challenges

When confronted by challenges of this scale and with such potentially serious implications, there are several possible ways of responding. A typical set of psychological responses to Peak Oil, for example, might include denial that it is happening, followed by fear, anxiety and anger²⁴. Equally, acceptance of the reality of Peak Oil and Climate Change can be accompanied by the recognition that these phenomena present tremendous opportunities to work together to remedy many of the destructive patterns of the present in the course of building the foundations for a sustainable future.

This is the way in which the members of the LFA are approaching the task before us. We are realists, and are under no illusions that these challenges will be difficult and testing, perhaps for long periods of time. However we are also optimists, and believe that the hard work of constructing a path to a sustainable and resilient future will bring enormous benefits and multiple rewards for all those who participate in this necessary and vital task.

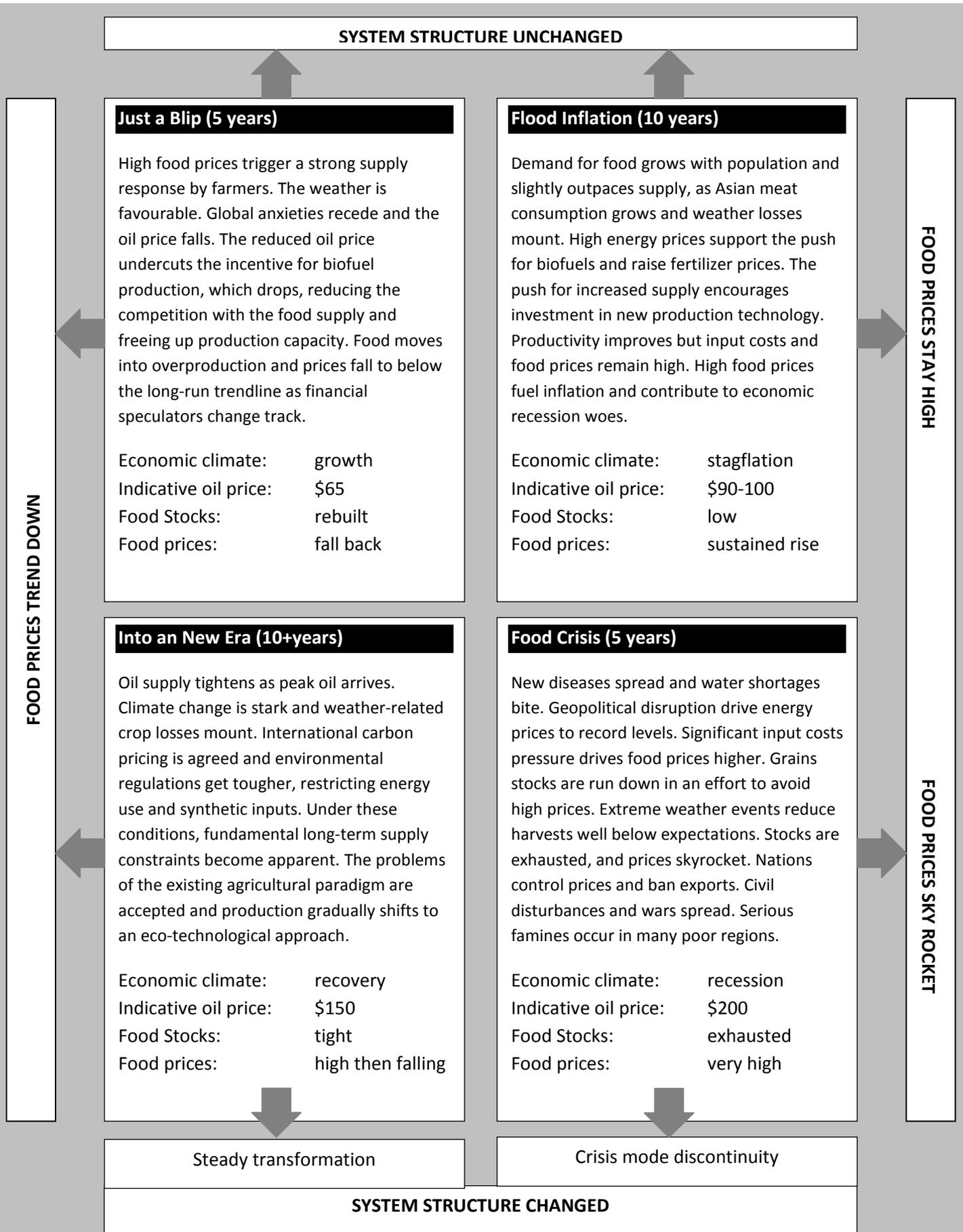
There is a sense at the moment that our towns and cities are being divided into 'rich' and 'poor' eaters – i.e. those who can afford to eat high-priced, highly nutritious certified organic, free-range, biodynamic products, and those who can't afford such produce and opt for the cheapest options, which also tend to be the less nutritious. This is one of the key challenges we face, in my opinion.

Nick Rose, Bellingen Local Food Network

The Coffs Coast Local Food Alliance has identified three main values which will guide our efforts to secure the integrity of our local and regional food system into the future²⁵.

- *Social Justice* – a system that is capable of providing a dignified livelihood to farmers and an increased number of skilled agricultural workers and growers. This signifies that farming and food-growing is once again valued as an integral and vital part of our community, and that the food produced is accessible to all socio-economic classes.
- *Resilience* – a system able to assure longer-term availability in the light of increasing global uncertainties;
- *Sustainability* – a system that can supply safe, healthy food with positive social benefits and low environmental impacts, thus guaranteeing the viability of food production in our region for future generations.

The challenge we have accepted is to reconcile these elements which will require a diverse range of approaches and strategies.



Source: Royal Institute of International Affairs (2009, p.19) *Food Futures: Rethinking UK Strategy*

Local Context

In order to develop a detailed and realistic strategic response it was necessary to answer the following questions:

- **What is our scope for this framework?** Defining the boundaries of time, activities and 'local'.
- **What is the scale of our agricultural industry at present?** A brief overview of the local agricultural industry.
- **What is the local food supply chain?** An exploration of all the elements that make up a food supply chain.
- **Who are the key players in our Local and Regional Food System?** This identifies existing initiatives that support the objectives of the Local Food Alliance so that we know what areas are already covered and what organisations/programs we can develop relationships with and support.
- **What is missing from our Local and Regional Food System?** This identifies other potential initiatives from around Australia or internationally. We can learn from these initiatives and adapt them to suit the Coffs Coast local food system.
- **What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges for our local area?** A review of our region in this way enables us to develop initiatives that fill in the gaps where we are seen as weak, build on our strengths and capitalise on new opportunities.

What is our scope for this Framework?

There are three types of boundaries that need to be defined for this Framework.

Timeframe

This Framework was developed as part of a NSW Environmental Trust Urban Sustainability Grant awarded to the Coffs Harbour City Council and the Bellingen Shire Council, acting in collaboration with other members of the Local Food Alliance, in December 2008. While the awarding of this grant forms the immediate context for the development of this Framework, the Framework itself will outlast the three—year period of the Grant. The Framework is intended to serve as the principal policy document for food re-localisation and resilience-building over the coming decade and beyond.

Activities

The scope of the actions identified by the stakeholders will be limited to localities in which the stakeholders are active; currently this is the Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Bellingen and Coffs Harbour. We envisage that this will expand to include Nambucca in the near future.

What do we mean by the term 'local' in local food?

There are many different definitions of 'local' food, all depending upon the view of the consumer or organisation's purpose.

For local produce markets, local might be defined by the time it takes to get from the farmer to the market. To them, local means that produce and fruit can be harvested and brought to the market within a day of travel. Food that has to travel more than a day to reach the market is out of range of being considered 'local'.

Another way of defining local is according to geographical areas, such as the local government area (LGA) you live in and extend this out to neighbouring LGAs. This brings with it the question of where do you draw the line. Others might say that state boundaries are more useful, although to those on the borders, such as Tweed, they will obviously have a closer connection to Queensland than to Bega.

A well accepted definition internationally is the "100-mile" limit. Where 'local' food is grown within 100 miles (160 kilometres) from a customer's place of residence. In the U.S.A. a survey conducted by the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture found the 100-mile definition was the most widely-accepted by the general population. Although this seemingly clear-cut definition raises other questions if your reasons for choosing local food also are based on environmental impacts such as reducing your carbon footprint (see **Food Miles** box).

Food Miles is a measure of how far food travels – from paddock to plate – and is an indication of how environmentally-friendly it is. Food freight consumes fuel and energy, and releases greenhouse pollution, affecting the global climate. Generally speaking, the lower the food miles the better choice the product is for the environment. Although, in determining energy consumption and CO₂ emissions the distance travelled is only a part of the picture, and often a small part. The type of transportation used is critical, as is the transport load factor (capacity of carrier and % filled), the type of fuel used and the type of packaging.

One thing to be wary of is that with all popular movements or trends, it is inevitable that certain organisations will try to co-opt the term and concepts for their own profit margins. A recent example of this is where Frito-Lay (owned by PepsiCo) has developed a marketing campaign that is trying to position the USA's biggest selling brand of potato chips as local food.

This Local Food Framework aims to promote a broader local food movement that values reviving small scale, ecological, place-based and relationship-based food systems.

From this perspective we feel that, rather than defining 'local', it is better to arm people with a series of questions (and start to assist in providing the answers) that will help them choose where, how and what to buy.

Can this produce be grown here? And, is this produce grown here?

If yes, where can I buy the local produce?

Just because certain types of fruit or veg can technically be grown in your area, doesn't mean you can find a local supplier. There may not be an outlet for this produce, or the grower has decided to sell this produce to an alternative market such as Sydney or Brisbane. A seasonal calendar will assist in re-connecting consumers with the concept of seasonal produce, allowing them to choose locally grown produce in the peak of its season and reduce expectations of all-year round availability.

If not, where is the next closest source?

This is where appropriate labelling helps consumers make suitable choices. If produce is labelled, or information is available to the consumer about where it was grown, people are able to make preference choices that fit their own set of principles (e.g. buying a Stanthorpe apple as opposed to a Tasmanian apple).

What kind of agricultural practices were used?

Is this produce chemical free, organic, free range etc?

Are farmers receiving decent prices for their produce?

Whilst some of this information might be available through labels, we envisage that a better approach is to increase the direct relationships between consumers and the origin of their food – the growers and their farms. This can be done through various forms, such as: consumers using growers markets to be able to speak to the farmers directly; through Community Supported Agriculture enterprises where farmers are guaranteed a decent price for the season; and where consumers can make farm visits.

'Having a national definition of local would be a pretty hard sell. People want to be able to know the story behind that particular food. They want to be able to see the farmer's face that produced it, they want to have been able to visit his farm to see his production method — develop some relationships and trust. That's going to be a much more appropriate definition of local for most folks than any particular mile definition.'

Andrew Larson, extension program specialist for small farms and sustainable agriculture

What is the scale of our agricultural industry at present?

Compared to the majority of Australian climactic regions the Coffs Coast is a rich, fertile and water secure place (at present). This situation needs to be recognised and cherished, especially when the rest of the country is battling drought, restricting water use and dealing with salinity.

Food production is a significant part of the Coffs Coast economy with agriculture, forestry and fishing contributing \$69 million to the total gross regional product for Coffs Harbour in 2008/9.²⁶ Add to this the \$130 million accounted for by accommodation and food services, and food-related activities which account for approximately 7.4% of the total Gross Regional Product of \$2.7 billion for 2008/9. Food processing and manufacturing is an opportunity for the future, as the majority of the output from the area is consumed or shipped as raw produce. In terms of employment, 3.8% of the economically active population was engaged in agriculture, forestry and fishing in 2006, and a further 10.8% in accommodation and food services.²⁷

The Bellingen Shire economy is largely based on agriculture such as dairy, beef and small crops. In the 2006 Census, Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing was the fourth most common industry of employment in Bellingen Shire, accounting for 9.4% of the local labour force. Within this sector, 'Sheep, Beef Cattle and Grain Farming' employs 4.0% of the local population (aged 15 years and over).

Whilst the Coffs Coast is traditionally known for growing bananas, in recent times blueberries have taken over as the largest cash crop. Annual blueberry production from farms in Corindi exceeds 2000 tonnes, with one farm being the largest supplier of fresh berries in the Australian market.

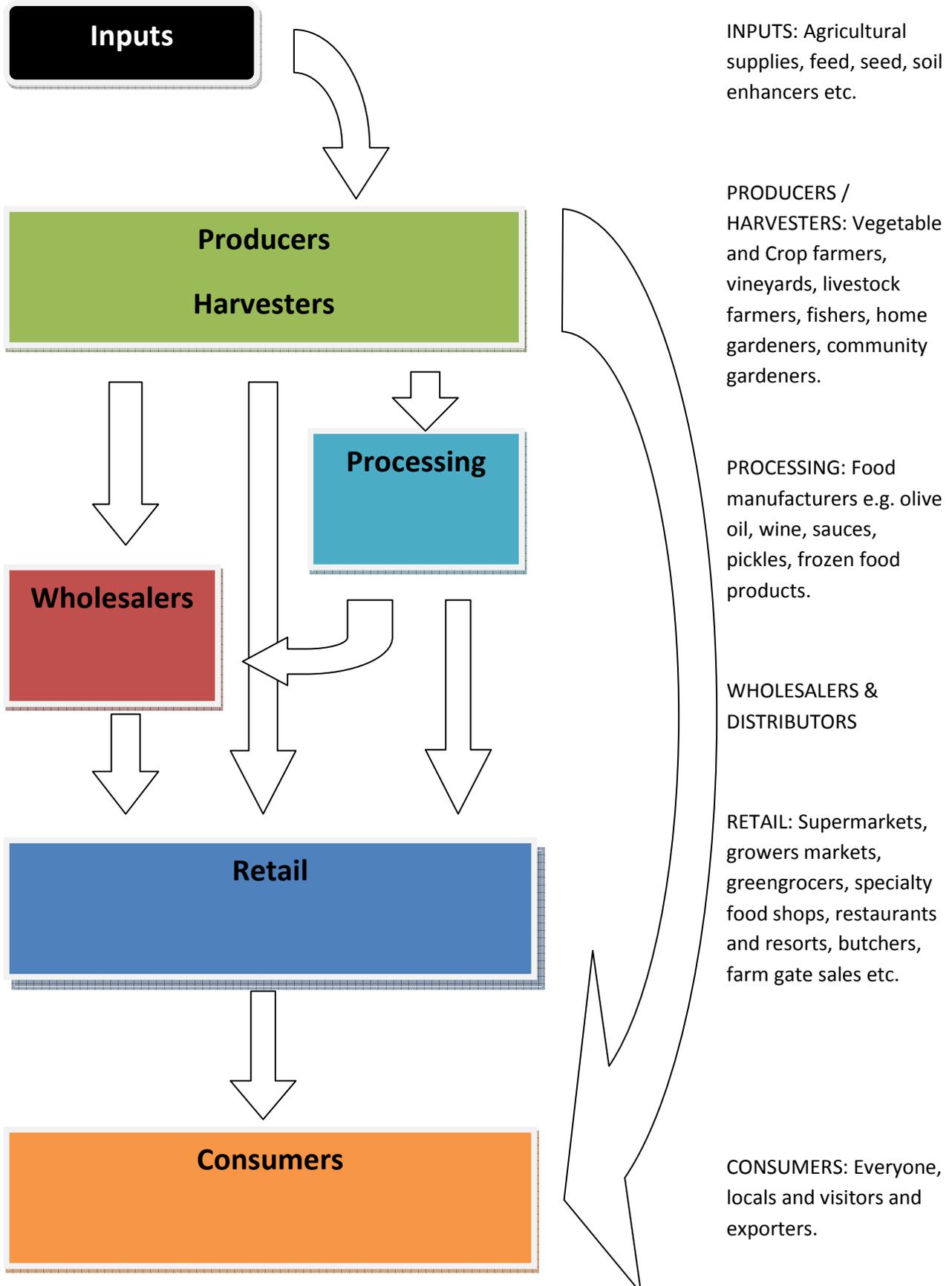
With the geographical constraints of our hinterland, broad acre farming is not the predominant farming model. Small scale farming is more popular due to the size of land holdings but also with the increase in new landholders moving to the area looking for small holdings that match their values, such as establishing organic farming enterprises.

As an indication of the diversity of crops that can be grown in the Coffs Coast we can look to the range of produce which is currently grown in the region by approximately 60 certified organic / in process of conversion farmers.²⁸ These include: Australian native spices (eg macadamia nuts, lemon, aniseed and cinnamon myrtle, Davidson plums, Tea Tree); avocados; bananas; beef cattle; citrus (lemons, limes, mandarins, oranges); coffee; dairy cattle; eggs; fruit (such as mangoes, lychees, passionfruit, watermelon, Davidson plum); mixed vegetables (such as garlic, leafy greens, pumpkin, mushrooms, sprouts); nut trees (macadamia, pecan) and wine grapes.

In NSW, the food sector generates approximately 20% of state gross product which represents significant opportunities for our local economy to become a larger part of this if we act now to strengthen our local and regional food system.

The importance of this sector should not be underestimated as it greatly impacts (and depends on) the state of the environment and our natural capital (water, soil, biodiversity). It also involves goods and services with immediate impacts on human health and wellbeing.

What is our Local Food Supply Chain?



Who are the key players in our Local Food System?

There is a diverse range of groups, events, organisations and initiatives that currently exist, or are evolving, in the Coffs Coast area and are linked to growing our local food system. Each of these key players has a unique role to play which is outlined below:

- **Farmers, Growers, Fishers** are the people who do the work of growing crops, raising livestock and poultry, catching fish and being environmental stewards at the same time.
- **Wholesalers** are the individuals and firms who purchase food and agricultural products in bulk from the farmers and re-sell it to retailers and restaurants.
- **Local retailers and restaurants** are the direct point of exchange for most consumers; they are also an important source of information about local produce, its seasonality and its availability.
- **Produce Markets** provide a strong link from the farmer to consumer. They re-connect consumers with the origins of their food, allow for increased social interaction within communities and increase the cash flowing directly into our local and regional economy.
- **Industry Organisations** - as peak bodies these organisations support their members and are important for their reach to members in the field, as well as sources of information.
- **Regional Networks or Projects** are important for the Coffs Coast and particularly the LFA to not just be aware of but be actively engaged with to leverage the work we do to have maximum impact.
- **Community Groups** are important in the development of grass-roots action, raising awareness about relevant issues, providing a forum for discussion and providing on-the-ground activities such as community gardens, film festivals and advocacy.
- **Local Government** has a key role to play in a number of different areas such as developing the local economy, increasing tourism, land use planning as well as supporting a diverse and active community.
- **State and National programs** are initiatives and organisations that operate on a larger basis than our region and are important sources of knowledge and learning. They can be catalysts for change as we can quickly transfer the successes or learn from the challenges they face.
- **International movements** are important to follow as they provide links to emergent trends and ideas for responses to the ever changing issues and challenges we have to face.

Refer to *Appendix C – Key Players* for specific details. The appendix is a useful reference and guide as it provides a summary of the group or initiative, their activities and details on where to find further information or who to contact. It is not designed to be an exhaustive list, rather to give an indication of the breadth and depth of what is happening in the arena of ‘local food’.

What is missing from our Local and Regional Food System?

A review was undertaken to identify potential initiatives that could be used in the Coffs Coast to strengthen the local food system. The following is a summary of the opportunities available to our region. This information will be used to evaluate initiatives and their relevance for our action planning. Refer to *Appendix D – Key Initiatives* for further information. The appendix provides a summary of each initiative, some benefits, challenges and information on where to find further information.

- **Community Supported Agriculture** as a model of agriculture that creates a direct relationship between local consumers and local farmers, whereby the consumers enter into a contractual relationship with the farmers in order to receive a regular box of fresh seasonal produce, typically vegetables and fruit.
- **Local Food Directory / Database** to raise the profile of Coffs Coast food and beverage producers with commercial and individual consumers so that they can be more assured of a secure economic future.
- **Farm Gate Trail** to promote and strengthen our local food sector, whilst creating greater tourist numbers to the Coffs Coast hinterland through encouraging the local and outside tourist market to explore more of the hinterland region.
- **Seasonal Produce Guide** to raise consumer awareness of the fruit and vegetables they can expect to be in bountiful supply in their local markets.
- **Buy Local – Branding of Local Produce** to provide consumers with the assurance that they are supporting the local food industry by purchasing quality Coffs Coast produce and products that are made from local ingredients. In responses to our online survey this initiative was consistently rated as one of the most important.
- **Food Processing** has the potential to increase the regional economy and could be conducted on a small to medium scale on the Coffs Coast.
- **Micro Credit for Small Scale Farms** as a way of overcoming the barriers of high start-up costs for small scale farming projects such as market gardens.
- **Food Groups / Associations / Alliances / Networks** are formed by growers and producers with a range of aims that focus on promoting local produce and products.
- **Community Education and Awareness Raising** is typically organised by local food groups or associations which aim at increasing consumer knowledge and participation in the local food supply chain.
- **Edible Gardens** involve a range of programs that support residents in the conversion of front and backyards into edible gardens.

“We need to educate consumers about the true cost of produce, about the price of food and how it is worked out, once we are locked into the supermarket system.”

Brad, Nambucca Valley Local Food Network

- **Food Production on Public Land** involves the conversion of public land or existing public ornamental gardens to plants that provide food, herbs or medicinal properties. For example this can include community gardens or the conversion of street trees to fruit trees.
- **Distribution Networks (including Wholesale Market or Produce Market):** Coffs Harbour could capitalise on its central location between Sydney and Brisbane to create a local wholesale market that services an area from Port Macquarie to Byron Bay.
- **Local Food Co-operative** to sell local produce through a consumers cooperative set up.
- **Linking Local Producers with Local Restaurants** is a way of increasing the awareness of local chefs about locally available produce and increasing access to that produce.
- **School-Based Vegetable Gardens** are popular and we need to support the uptake and ongoing use of school based vegetable gardens in our region
- **Urban Planning for Local Food Systems** is seen as a new and growing area in which planners and the planning system are able to pursue local food production opportunities.
- **Centre for Small Scale Farming and Local Food Systems** would be an educational resource centre to assist local farmers and strengthen the local food system.
- **Farm Clusters and Farm Business Centres:** Clusters are individually operated farms that are co-located within the same boundary. The Cluster is developed to share infrastructure, running costs, and expertise. This is similar to the Business Park concept in urban areas. Centres would provide business services specifically for farmers in the Cluster.
- **Food Systems Assessment / Mapping the Local Food Supply Chain** are tools which can be used to create a locally-owned knowledge and evidence base about the state of local and regional food system. It provides an overview of the entire system and its five sectors – production, processing, distribution and exchange, consumption, and waste / recycling – and assists in identifying areas where policy changes need to be made and resources and programmes need to be directed to strengthen the local and regional food system.
- **Food Policy Council** is a way to overcome the fragmentation in a local or regional food system by providing a forum in which all the key stakeholders can come together to share perspectives, discuss common issues, identify priority action areas, as well as to evaluate existing policy and lobby for policy change. More than forty such Councils are active at the local, regional and state levels in North America, and demands have been made for their establishment at the state level in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. Last December the Tasmanian Government established Australia's first-ever Food Security Council, which will exercise functions similar to those of a Food Policy Council.

What are our strengths, weaknesses, challenges and opportunities?

To determine the answer to this question, the LFA gathered input and ideas from the following sources and methods:

- Discussions and interviews with individuals involved in various aspects of the food supply chain.
- An open Food Futures Forum held in Coffs Harbour in March 2009.
- Analysis undertaken by local community groups (BLFN, CROPO, Bellingen Landcare).

The results have been summarised into the four categories: strengths, weaknesses, challenges and opportunities. Note that these have been focused into localised issues, and should be considered in the context of the global issues as identified in the *Drivers for Change* section.

Strengths

Climate: high rainfall, good soil and a good climatic diversity across the coast, valley and mountains.

Geographical: Land availability is currently good with some landowners also willing to allow access for food growing purposes. Easy access especially with waterways.

Population: Low population levels

Knowledge: Good knowledge base available in the region. Some schools have started kitchen gardens.

Retail sector: Strong support of local produce (especially in Bellingen and growing in Coffs Harbour)

Agricultural: Strong organic influences with a lot of people interested and supportive. Livestock requires low energy inputs when compared to UK examples.

New Initiatives: Already experiments and pilot projects happening e.g. shared gardening co-op. Plans well underway with the establishment of community gardens (Bellingen)

Environmental: High levels of biodiversity (although under threat).

Organisational: Already have active organisations including Landcare, Biodynamic Association, Organic Marketing Company, Bellingen Local Food Network, NSW Farmers Association etc.

Weaknesses

Agricultural: Current farming models mainly based on monocultures. Lack of a good range of edible crops.

Economic: Horticulture is a hard way to make a living, with traditionally low economic returns. Demographic is split between time-rich, cash poor people and time-poor, cash-rich people.

Knowledge: Lack of 'deep knowledge' of sustainable farming. Some tree-change new residents have minimal knowledge about farming practices for their new ventures. Lack of skilled agricultural work force.

Supply Chain: Long length of the food supply chain creates disconnect between grower and consumer and increases costs/decreases profits for grower.

Consumers: Lack of local food consumption patterns. Consumers expect year round availability and perfect looking produce. Lack of knowledge about how to cook with a range of seasonal produce.

Processing: Lack of local food processing with much of the surplus crops going to waste.

Low Pressure: Complacency against change within the system because many do not believe we are at a crisis point.

Resources: Lack of access to good tools.

Planning: Disparate landholdings without sustainable standards of management, especially in rural-residential zonings.

Challenges

Climate: Susceptible to extreme weather events (esp. flooding).

Population: Increasing pressure from sea/tree changers and retirees. At the same time there is a 'youth drain' as they move away after school.

Land use: Increasing encroachment of residential and rural residential developments on agricultural land.

Environmental: Threat from Genetically Modified Organisms to local biodiversity.

Competition: The power wielded by multinationals and supermarkets puts pressure on the growers. Imported produce at subsidised prices. Perception that supermarkets are good value for money. Limited outlets for local produce in retail markets.

Continuity of Supply: Local produce retailers need a continuity of supply to meet the expectations of their customers.

Eating Habits: Consumers enjoy their junk food. Underlying belief that fast food is cheaper than a healthy alternative.

Consumer Awareness: Need to encourage more residents and business to buy local produce. Increase awareness about the benefits of local food. Lack of consumer knowledge about what is available and from where and belief that local food is more expensive.

Knowledge: Lack of opportunities for sharing skills and knowledge. Support required for the transition to sustainable agricultural methodologies.

Opportunities

Employment: Increase in local production and processing would increase employment.

Health Benefits: Improved mental and physical health through healthy eating and more exercise and social connectivity.

Processing: Increase opportunities to turn current waste or seasonal gluts into value added produce.

Environmental: Through more sustainable agricultural practices attain enhanced soil and increase biodiversity.

Knowledge: Recovering and valuing indigenous knowledge. Training and encouraging the next generation of growers. Documenting existing knowledge for wider use. Networking. Linking sustainable gardening into the school curriculum.

Farming Systems: Increased use of alternative farming models such as Community Supported Agriculture.

Land use: Create a supportive environment for the sharing of land, a land bank or land for low rent. Creation of edible streetscapes – replacing ornamental plants. Forest farming.

Awareness Raising: A local food directory to assist in connecting growers and consumers. Education about the true cost of food. Branding of local food. Local food events, for example film nights, long lunches, progressive farm dinners, biggest local picnic etc.

Retail: Support growers market expansion. Mapping the buying needs of restaurants and linking this to what is grown.

Tourism: Increase awareness and value of local produce.

Infrastructure and Equipment: Assistance with sharing of machinery and tools.

A Strategic Approach

What are our Strategic Areas?

The following eight strategic areas have been selected to drive future initiatives and action.

Policy

The promotion of local and regional food systems goes beyond farming. It puts food on the agenda of policy makers in all sectors and at all levels, directing them to be aware of the environmental, health and economic consequences of their decisions around food production, processing, distribution, consumption and waste / recycling.

Local food policy requires coordinated action that contributes to ensuring safer and healthier goods and services, and cleaner, more sustainable and resilient environments. It requires the identification of obstacles and ways of removing them. The aim must be to make the local food choice the easier choice for both policy makers and for consumers.

Food Alliances

Food and agriculture issues significantly affect public health, land use, community culture, economy, environment and quality of life. In regional areas such as Coffs Coast, different government agencies are responsible for these individual issues, but there is no single government body coordinating ways that food production and consumption impact these different areas. To address this gap some regions in New South Wales have developed a regional Alliance as a response.

An Alliance serves as a comprehensive bridge of communication between community, government and business stakeholders, enabling them to jointly build and implement a common vision for the region's food supply. An Alliance can make recommendations, coordinate programs, create new programs, and address policy barriers. An Alliance also serves as a citizen resource and a source of inspiration for grassroots efforts to support farmers markets, community gardens, local food sourcing etc.

The Coffs Coast Local Food Alliance has been established with these goals. On-going support for the LFA needs to be secured to guarantee its long term sustainability. Government and non-government agencies can support the Alliance through providing technical support, in-kind support, funding or staff assistance, publicity and support for specific projects.

This vision of an Alliance in many ways resembles the Food Policy Councils that have been established in recent decades in North America. One way in which the LFA might develop is to either become a regional Food Policy Council, or help nurture one as a strategic project.

Leadership

Leaders are crucial in changing perceptions about what is possible. We need to build the skills, networks, confidence and profile of existing and emerging leaders within the local and regional food system. One way to achieve this may be through strategic partnerships with existing leadership programs. Other alternatives include supporting leaders as they emerge in community groups or industry organisations.

Knowledge and Skills

Knowledge gathering, sharing and utilisation need to be developed on a 'food systems' basis that links agriculture, food and health. It will involve developing a research capability that comprehends the food system as a whole, and having people who are capable of leading the system in new directions. Linking with existing networks is key in sharing knowledge and expanding the access to skilled people.

"There needs to be more knowledge-sharing, peer-to-peer, farmer-to-farmer...We should {for example} be looking at ways in which we can use manure as fertiliser, not just rely on chemicals."

Dale, Goat and Pig Farmer, Bowraville

We need to fill the gaps in our knowledge and skills in specific disciplines (for example, in sustainable farming practices) but also along the food supply chain. Agriculture and farming needs to be re-branded if it is to be competitive in attracting and retaining the sorts of people we need.

Focusing on a knowledge agenda puts at the forefront our need to base our decisions on sound research and common understandings. Through this process we can build cross-sector networks, fund scoping activities and support innovation across the system. Any knowledge agenda should not only focus on the gathering of these resources but also on the application of it in practical situations that makes a real difference to our quality of life.

Farming and the Food Supply Chain

There is a great need and opportunity to explore new farming practices that would be viable despite potentially severe shortages of energy, nutrients, water and carbon. There may be large advantages in linking conventional agriculture with current farming practices labelled 'alternative', i.e. organic, biodynamic, permaculture, biological farming etc., as well as the more generalised application of techniques such as Integrated Pest Management.

There is scope to expand alternative food production and distribution strategies such as farmers markets, Community Supported Agriculture enterprises, and urban food production. In particular, a type of closed loop cycle could be created if integrated with public transport and re-engineered with waste streams to provide recycled water, energy and nutrients for food production.

"The middle pieces are what's often missing for small farmers who want to expand their businesses. We can increase our supply, and we know that there is a demand for our products, but where do we process our foods and how do we transport and store them? Right now, most of those systems are designed to accommodate large scale producers and buyers rather than small operations."

Janie Burns, small farm entrepreneur from Canyon County, Idaho U.S.A. quoted in NACo Center for Sustainable Communities 2007.

Food supply chain re-design should aim to:

- Shorten food chains
- Reduce transport and energy costs
- Reconnect people with food and how it is grown
- Increase consumption of fresh, whole foods

Infrastructure for Local Producers

To have a vibrant local food system, a region must have solid infrastructure to support it. Small and mid-sized producers are most likely to sell their products locally, and infrastructure gives them the leg up they need to begin expanding production. It also encourages new small and mid-sized entrepreneurs to start up operations.

Infrastructure for local producers means land on which to grow food, suppliers from which to purchase seeds, inputs, tools and machinery; facilities in which to store goods, processing and packing facilities to transform raw products into marketable ones, and shipping and distribution methods to deliver products to buyers. Support needs to be provided in these areas to ensure our local growers are in the best position to realise opportunities in the future.

Community Education and Awareness Raising

Consumer concerns and demand for different types of food, produced and distributed in different ways, can become expressed as new consumption preferences which change the marketplace. Even though they may be relatively small (compared to the mainstream market) they can have real economic impacts, either because of their purchasing power or because there are marketing companies or producers focused on finding new niche markets to expand.

Strategies to assist consumers evaluate their choices include promotion of what produce is in season and what is grown locally, reducing food waste at the household level and choosing a sustainable diet.

Strengthen Community Actions

Improving the local food system will work by creating effective community action - setting priorities, making decisions, planning strategies and implementing them. At the heart of this process is the empowerment of communities - their ownership and control of their own endeavours and destinies.

Community development draws on existing human and material resources in the community to enhance self-help and social support, and to develop flexible systems for strengthening public participation in and direction of local food matters. This requires full and continuous access to information, learning opportunities, as well as funding support.

ASSESSING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF OUR FOOD SYSTEM

Assessing the sustainability of any food system from paddock to plate is extremely complex and difficult. There are no commonly agreed, standardised metrics, nor are there good data to underpin measurement, certification and accreditation systems.

The lack of any accepted assessment framework is in itself one of the major long-term challenges. Consumers are increasingly interested in the production and provenance of their food. Their concerns range from:

- environmental factors such as greenhouse gas emissions, water consumption and biodiversity loss;
- ethical concerns around animal welfare and genetically modified organisms;
- human health concerns about nutrition, contamination, pesticides and additives; and
- social concerns about issues such as fair trade, child labour and support for local producers.

In the absence of any widely agreed standards, faced with consumers' demands for reassurance about food quality in the broadest sense, and seeking product differentiation, a plethora of different approaches has emerged. Some of these are long standing and refer to specific production systems, such as *organic*, *biodynamic* and *free range*. Others are more recent and refer to specific ways of assessing products, such as food miles and embodied water. None of these labels or approaches purport to cover all the concerns listed above, which is fair enough, but it leaves consumers in a quandary trying to sort out a plethora of competing claims.

Source: ACF (2008, p.10)

"We as farmers need to diversify our production, we need to observe the land, see what it will support. Diversification is key because if one crop fails, then we have something else to fall back on. If we don't change, we are going down. Mapping the resources is key, including water and access to labour."

William, Fruit grower, Nambucca

How will the strategic areas be put into action?

We see it as the role and responsibility of all government agencies, non-government organisations, industry and individuals to adopt the principles outlined in this Framework and develop responses appropriate for them or their organisation.

We have outlined strategic areas that are crucial for a comprehensive response to enable a strong, resilient local and regional food system on the Coffs Coast. In responses to our online survey, Community Education and Awareness-Raising was seen as the most important of the Strategic Areas, followed by infrastructure for local producers and supporting the development and sharing of knowledge and skills.

Over the coming months and years we will be looking to develop and strengthen our partnerships with other groups, organisations and agencies to be able to deliver key actions.

At present, the Coffs Coast Local Food Alliance can act as a central focus for activity. The Alliance has a *Steering Group* which was set up to drive the development of this framework and initiate specific actions as well as *Members* who are interested in supporting the vision. Within the Alliance, *Working Groups* will be formed and disbanded as required to deliver projects.

A summary table of strategic actions is presented on the following page. This table lists a range of key actions and indicates the strategic area(s) that they support. As you will see, some of the actions are already in place or are being addressed through Working Groups.

Currently the Alliance has established *Working Groups* to deliver projects in the following areas:

- **Bellingen Community Gardens**
- **Coffs Harbour Community Gardens**
- **Community Education and Awareness Raising**
- **Strategic Planning and Evaluation**

Each of these groups will **develop its own action plan** to address **its** selected strategic areas. The *Working Groups* will meet as required and report back to the *Steering Group* to ensure a coordinated approach and share knowledge and experience to build the capacity of our community to respond to these challenges.

We encourage the development of other *Working Groups* to address any areas that are not being covered by these groups.

When will this Framework be reviewed?

In order to maintain enthusiasm and increase community and industry participation in future years, the Alliance will review this Framework on an annual basis. The review will document and celebrate the achievements made in each of the strategic areas.

EXAMPLE ACTIONS		STRATEGIC AREAS							
	EXISTING or ADDRESSED THROUGH A WORKING GROUP	Policy	Food Alliance	Leadership	Knowledge and Skills	Farming Systems and Food Supply Chain	Infrastructure	Comm. Education & Awareness Raising	Strengthen Community Actions
Backyard Gardening					X			X	
Branding of Local produce	WG3*							X	X
Centre for Small Scale Farming and Urban Agriculture					X	X	X		
Choosing a sustainable diet	WG3							X	
Communication and Discussion (Speaker Program)	WG3		X	X	X				
Community Gardens	WG1 + 2				X				X
Community Supported Agriculture	New				X	X			X
Eating in Season	WG3				X			X	
Farm Clusters and Farm Business Centres						X			
Farm Gate Trail	WG3					X		X	
Farmers Markets	Existing			X		X		X	
Food Sensitive Urban Design (LEPs, DCPs, other policies)		X		X					
Horticultural Workshops					X				X
Local Food Film Festival	WG3				X			X	X
Local Food Purchasing Policies		X							
Local Produce Directory - Linking Growers and Chefs	WG3				X	X		X	
Micro-financing for small scale farm start-ups							X		
Permablitz	WG3				X			X	X
Rural Leadership Program				X					
School based Vegetable Gardens					X				X
Share use of land by landholders		X				X			
Shared processing and packing facilities							X		
Shipping and distribution methods							X		
Support emerging leaders in the industry				X					X
Support existing networks e.g. BLFN, CROPO, TTs			X	X					X
Support for the Alliance (e.g. in-kind support, funding etc)			X						
Urban food production (Edible Gardens, Public Land Use)		X							
Waste Reduction								X	

WG1 = Bellingen Community Garden Working Group

WG2 = Coffs Harbour Community Garden Working Group

WG3 = Community Education and Awareness Raising Working Group

*evaluation of feasibility

How can I become Involved?

Become a member of the LFA

Membership is open to anyone who is interested in local food in the Coffs Coast region. Membership is free and members form the 'community of interest'.

Members can elect to join any working group(s) they are interested in. Communication to members is via an e-newsletter. This distribution list is currently held by Coffs Harbour City Council. More info and how to join available at: www.coffsharbour.nsw.gov.au/localfood

Join a Working Group

If you want to become more actively involved, or are interested in a specific area, then you may be interested in becoming part of a working group. It is early days in the formation of the Alliance and the Working Groups are just beginning to emerge; now is the time to put your name forward and help take the vision into action.

Current *Working Groups* and contact details:

- **Bellingen Community Garden**

The Community Garden will be a multifunctional education-focused garden and is intended to be a model of sustainable living practices. There will also be a separate allotment style community garden. The Bellingen Community Gardens Association has been established to take this process forward in an accountable, transparent and democratic way. Currently seeking core teams of gardeners to participate. Contact: Nick Rose on 0429 496 792 or email nick.rose96@gmail.com

- **Coffs Harbour Regional Community Garden**

The Community Garden will be a model of sustainable living practices and include allotment and demonstration areas. Currently seeking interested gardeners to be part of this exciting project. Contact: Adam Curlis on 6658 1991 or email adam.curlis@tafensw.edu.au

- **Community Education and Awareness Raising**

An initial seven projects have been identified for this working group to implement. Projects were identified through stakeholder workshops and discussions. The Coffs Coast Local Food Film Festival is one of these Projects with its own website: <http://www.coffscoastlocalfoodfilmfestival.org.au/>. Contact: Lynn Delgado on 6648 4646 or email lynn.delgado@chcc.nsw.gov.au

Start a Project

If you see an opportunity for your or your organisation to work in a specific strategic area we encourage government agencies, non-government organisations, industry and individuals to create their own project team or *Working Group* to make it happen. The LFA Steering Group will be able to help initiate the process and put you in contact with other interested people and organisations. Contact: Kristina Cooke on 6648 4089 or email kristina.cooke@chcc.nsw.gov.au

Links and Further Information

AUSTRALIAN

Australian City Farms and Community Gardens Network

<http://communitygarden.org.au/>

A web-based network seeking to promote community gardening around Australia through providing resources and information, as well as a forum for the sharing of experiences and stories by community gardens in diverse locations.

Coffs Coast Local Food Film Festival

<http://www.coffscostlocalfoodfilmfestival.org.au/>

The new website of the Local Food Alliance's very first regional Local Food Film Festival. Five feature films, including the internationally acclaimed *End of the Line*, will be screened at venues in Sawtell, Bowraville and Bellingen during June 2010. The Festival has already attracted the support of many local businesses and organisations, laying the foundations for solid growth in future years.

Friends of the Earth Adelaide: Plains to Plate Convergence

<http://www.adelaide.foe.org.au/?tag=from-plains-to-plate>

A gathering of over 700 farmers, academics, government, health and community workers, and many others at the University of Adelaide in February 2010. The outcome was a declaration for the future of food in South Australia: <http://futureoffoodsa.ning.com/page/declaration-1>.

Food Connect

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

Food Connect is a 'hybrid Community Shared Agriculture' enterprise that was started in 2005 in Brisbane. It supplies fresh and processed produce from 100 farmers and growers in the Brisbane region to approximately 1000 subscribers in the Brisbane suburbs. It has recently been replicated in Sydney, Adelaide and Melbourne, with plans for further replications in many other areas around Australia including the Coffs Coast.

Landcare Groups

Community-based not-for-profit organisations that support community initiatives and involvement in natural resource management.

www.bellingerlandcare.org.au or www.coffsharbourlandcare.org.au

Permablitz

<http://www.permablitz.net/>

Permablitzes are 'an informal gathering involving a day on which a group of people come together to create or add to edible gardens, share skills related to permaculture and sustainable living, build community networks and have fun'. They were begun in Melbourne in 2006 and have since spread across Australia.

Sydney Food Futures Alliance

www.sydneyfoodfairness.org.au/

SFFA formed in Sydney in 2005 to coordinate the efforts of rural producers, health professionals, community workers and community-based advocates active in developing a socially, economically and environmentally sustainable food system in the Sydney region.

True Food Network

www.truefood.org.au/

The True Food Network is a growing community of everyday Australians, chefs, food experts, farmers and community groups uniting to protect our food from genetic engineering (GE).

INTERNATIONAL

f3

www.localfood.org.uk/index.html

f3 is a UK based community interest company that provides market research, business planning and consultancy services to organisations and enterprises involved in local food and farming, and related sustainability initiatives.

La Via Campesina

<http://www.viacampesina.org/en/>

The 'international movement of peasants, small- and medium-sized producers, landless, rural women and indigenous people, rural youth and agricultural workers', Via Campesina was founded in 1993 and has 148 member organisations, representing between 150 and 200 million people, in 70 countries.

Local Harvest

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

A US-based website promoting the benefits of connecting farmers directly with local consumers. It provides national and local information on farmers' markets, family farms, CSAs and other outlets where consumers can source the best local produce. Similar initiatives are now underway in Australia, e.g.: <http://www.sunshinecoastregionalfood.com/localharvest/>.

Making Local Food Work

www.makinglocalfoodwork.co.uk/

An initiative managed by the Plunkett Foundation and funded by the Big Lottery Fund to explore community enterprise approaches to connecting land and people through food.

Sustain

www.sustainweb.org

The alliance for better food and farming advocates food and agriculture policies and practices that enhance the health and welfare of people and animals, improve the

Sustainable Table

www.sustainabletable.org/home.php

Sustainable Table celebrates local sustainable food, educates consumers on food-related issues and works to build community through food.

The Sustainable Food Lab

www.sustainablefoodlab.org/

The mission of the Sustainable Food Lab is to accelerate the shift of sustainable food from niche to mainstream.

Slow Food

<http://www.slowfood.com/>

A 'non-profit, eco-gastronomic member-supported organization founded in 1989 to counteract fast food and fast life, the disappearance of local food traditions and people's dwindling interest in the food they eat, where it comes from, how it tastes and how our food choices affect the rest of the world'. Slow Food Slow Food Australia has 'convivia' in all Australian states and territories:

<http://slowfoodaustralia.com.au/convivia/>.

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Appendix A - Abbreviations

BLFN	Bellingen Local Food Network
BSC	Bellingen Shire Council
CROPO	Coffs Region Organic Producers Organisation.
CHCC	Coffs Harbour City Council
CHRL	Coffs Harbour Regional Landcare
LFA	Local Food Alliance
NCAHS	North Coast Area Health Service
BL	Bellingen Landcare
CSA	Community Supported Agriculture

Appendix B - Glossary

Food Miles is a measure of how far food travels – from paddock to plate – and is an indication of how environmentally-friendly it is. Food freight – especially by air and road – consumes fuel and energy, and releases greenhouse pollution, affecting the global climate. Generally speaking, the lower the food miles the better choice the product is for the environment.

Food Resilience is the ability within a society to deal with multiple food shocks and long-term changes through the creation of multiple alternative models of production and distribution based on networked small(er) scale systems of production and distribution that are localised, use regional resources, that enhances diversity of food varieties available while strengthening community capacity to produce food and engage in socio-technical innovation in the creation of new models.
Larry Langman (2009)

Food sovereignty has been defined by Via Campesina as “the right of peoples to define their own food and agriculture; 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; to restrict the dumping of products in their markets; and to provide local fisheries-based communities the priority in managing the use of and the rights to aquatic resources. 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.”
Source: Statement on Peoples' Food Sovereignty" by Via Campesina, et al.

Sustainable Local Food Economies can be described as a sustainable system of producing, processing and trading food, where the physical and economic activity is largely contained and controlled within the locality or region where the food was produced, and which delivers health, economic, environmental and social benefits to the people living and working in those areas.

Appendix C – Key Players

Community Groups

Bellingen Local Food Network and the Bellingen Community Gardens Association

The Bellingen Community Gardens Association (BCGA) grew out of the Bellingen Local Food Network (BLFN). The BLFN was formed in 2007 by a group of local residents who want to ensure that people in the shire have continued access to fresh, nutritious, affordable, local food, no matter what environmental and social challenges the future may bring.

Their medium- to long-term goals are to build agricultural and social resilience as well as a stronger community spirit.

Activities that the BLFN and BCGA are involved in include:

- Hosting Local Food film festivals including local food dinners.
- Workshops covering topics such as composting, establishing a garden bed, choosing correct varieties for the season and climate, seed propagation, and dealing with pests and diseases.
- A share gardening co-op on private land
- Promoting the establishment of market gardens
- Establishing model community gardens
- Promoting the concept of “Permaculture”
- Networking with local growers and other community groups with similar aims, such as Bellinger Landcare
- Working towards the establishment of a Community Supported Agriculture scheme

Contact person: Nick Rose

Email: nick.rose96@gmail.com

Bellingen Seed Savers

Aim to ensure a reliable source of delicious, nutritious local food into the future. They seek seeds and plants that grow well in the Bellingen area, whether they have been handed down through generations of local growers or have been brought in from elsewhere and adapted to our conditions.

Contact person: Irene Wallin

Phone: 6655 9090

Email: treeferns@westnet.com.au

Website: www.ecobello.org.au/ click on ‘The Forum’ and visit Bellingen Seed Savers

Nambucca Valley Local Food Network

Formed in 2008 by small-scale growers and local residents from Macksville, Nambucca and Bowraville, the NVLFN was formed to promote the support of local farmers and growers in the Nambucca Valley as well as the responsible consumption of food. The NVLFN is working with members of the BLFN and the BCGA to organise the first Coffs Coast Local Food Film Festival.

Contact: Shana Henry

Phone: 6568 3568

Email: mattnshana@paintedguitar.com

North Bank Road Community Garden

The North Bank Road Community Garden was formed by local Bellingen residents in 2009. It is a community garden and urban farm located on land donated by a private landowner near the centre of Bellingen. It provides opportunities for community gardening for nearby residents; some food is being sold to local shops and restaurants. Social activities also take place at the garden.

Contact: Olivia Bernadetti, oliviaonearth@gmail.com

Simply Natural Organic Farm and the Dorrigo Green Lifestyle Group

Simply Natural Organic farm is a thriving, productive working lifestyle system. The gardens, orchards, animal systems and sustainable management practices offer an inspiring living classroom to learn from. Jade is a dynamic, passionate advocate of organic, holistic living and she is generous in sharing her experiences. Jade is the author of 4 books on organic gardening which are wonderful resources and to many they are considered their organic gardening bibles. Jades books have been written to inspire and guide you to action. Jade believes that it is vitally important for people to be growing their own food in their own yard or community. She also encourages your development of neighbourhood sharing and exchange for local community involvement, support and development. Jade and Paul Woodhouse live Simply, Naturally, and organically...the 'Good Life'. The self reliant lifestyle they wish to show you is extremely abundant and enhances our care on the environment. Jade Woodhouse offers - Education courses, - Organic gardening books, - Consultations & - Personal Gardening Tuition.

Contact person: Jade Woodhouse

Phone: 6657 3368

Email: paul.jade@bigpond.com.au

Website: <http://www.simplynaturalorganic.com/index.html>

Coffs Regional Organic Producers' Organisation Inc.

The Coffs Regional Organic Producers' Organisation Inc (C.R.O.P.O.) aims to foster and promote organic, permaculture, and bio-dynamic practice on the Mid North Coast.

Contact person: David Wilson

Phone: 6658 1991

Email: sevenheaven@tadaust.org.au

Website: www.cropo.org.au

Mid North Coast Seed Savers

Contact person: David Wilson

Phone: 6658 1991

Email: sevenheaven@tadaust.org.au

Produce Markets

Coffs Harbour Growers Markets

The Coffs Coast Growers' Market is a not-for-profit business enterprise managed by Coffs Harbour City Council, with stallholder fees injected back into its promotion and organisation. The Market is held every Thursday in the City Square and aims to assist in the promotion and preservation of the local agricultural industry by assisting local producers to maximise the viability and profits of their business, and encouraging people to get involved within the industry. The Market also aims to encourage a healthier lifestyle through the provision of fresh locally produced goods, enhance trade within the City Square by bringing more people in and enriching the ambience of the Square, and create a greater awareness of what the Coffs Coast agricultural industry has to offer.

Contact person: Jan Rooney

Phone: 6648 4084

Email: janice.rooney@chcc.nsw.gov.au

Website: <http://www.coffsharbour.nsw.gov.au/www/html/921-coffs-coast-growers-market.asp>

Bellingen Growers Market

The Bellingen Growers Market provides locals with fresh, "chemical free" produce without added transport costs. It supports local backyard and commercial growers and producers. Natural produce is goods that have been grown without human-made chemicals i.e. pesticides and fertilisers. The market provides a meeting place for the exchange of ideas and allows buyers buy fresh goods directly from the growers.

The Market is held on the 2nd and 4th Saturday of every month at the Bellingen Showground.

Contact person: Enrico Malcisi

Phone: 6655 8566

Email: bellingengrowersmarket@westnet.com.au

Website: <http://www.bellingen.com/growersmarket/>

Bellingen Community Markets

A vibrant marketplace which is home to a fantastic range of handmade arts and crafts, local food and fresh produce, massage and alternative therapies with live entertainment for all the family.

The markets are held every 3rd Saturday of the month.

Phone: 6655 2151

Email: via website

Website: <http://www.bellingenmarkets.com.au/>

Industry Organisations

Organic Marketing Company

The Organic Marketing Company Pty Ltd is a farmer owned company. This company exclusively markets certified organic and biodynamic produces. They trade in raw and value added products to local, domestic and international markets.

The aim is to empower farmers to balance their production, profit and organic systems by enhancing marketing opportunities.

Contact person: Tom Hackett

Phone: 6653 4449

Email: organicmarketingcompany@yahoo.com.au

Biodynamic Agriculture Australia

Contact details: PO Box 54, Bellingen, NSW, 2454

Phone: 02 6655 0566

Website: www.biodynamics.net.au

NSW Farmers Association

Works to ensure the best possible results for farmers, rural and regional communities. Develop effective working relationships with key politicians and public servants to represent farming concerns and to achieve effective legislation.

Contact person: Gary Dew, Mid North Coast District Council or Michael Burt,
burtm@nswfarmers.org.au

Community Gardens

CHESSE

CHESSE have two programs that relate to local food which they operate for their clients:

- Farm at Wells Crossing: Approved clients of CHESSE can work at the CHESSE Farm, one or two days per week. Duties include planting, propagating, picking and general farm work.
- Community Garden at the Botanical Gardens: Under guidance, participants develop skills in organic gardening, grow and nurture herbs, vegetables and flowers. Participants have input into what will be grown and will access the fresh, nutritious food that is produced.

Contact: John Mandile

Email: Jjohn@chessemployment.com.au

Website: <http://www.chessemployment.com.au/>

Bellingen Share Garden

This informal initiative was started on private land in May 2008, with the participation of 10 families. Motivated by a desire to learn how to grow some of his own food and to do so co-operatively with like-minded others, the landowner and his family have made available about 1/3rd of an acre, which has been divided into 10 beds, approximately 15 metres long by 1 metre wide. Now into its second year, this experiment in communal growing has proved to be a resounding success.

Contact person: Siddhanta Hazell

Phone: 6655 0453

Email: hazells1@bigpond.com

Asian Community Garden in Orara Valley

The Buddhist monastery in Orara Valley are working with CROPO to develop a community garden with the aim of showcasing Asian foods and herbs. This will provide increased links between the monastery and the wider population.

Other Local Networks or Regional Projects

Northern Rivers Food Links

NSW Environmental Trust funded project which is a collaboration of seven Northern Rivers Councils.

The project aims to future proof the Northern Rivers urban communities against the impacts of Climate Change and Peak Oil by addressing the environmental impacts of food supply chains locally.

Email: info@northernriversfoodlinks.com.au

Phone: 02 6686 3972

Website: www.northernriversfoodlinks.com.au

Transition Bellingen

Transition Bellingen began as a project of the Bellingen Climate Action Group in February 2008 and joined the international Transition Town Network a few months later. Their goal is to create a resilient and conscious community that can meet the coming challenges of climate change and peak oil.

Contact: transitionbellingen@gmail.com

Northern Rivers Climate Change Collaboration/Sustain Northern Rivers

A resilience focused project engaging key stakeholders on the northern rivers area.

Contact person: Annie Kia, North Coast Area Health Service

Phone: 66207504

Email: Annie.Kia@ncahs.health.nsw.gov.au

Bellingen Landcare

Bellingen Landcare Incorporated is a community-based not-for-profit organisation supporting community initiatives and involvement in natural resource management in Bellingen Shire and beyond. Established a Small Farms Network.

Website: <http://www.bellingerlandcare.org.au>

Coffs Harbour Regional Landcare

Coffs Harbour Regional Landcare Inc (CHRL) is an umbrella group for approximately 50 land-caring sites, groups and associations, comprising of dune, river, estuary, bush, coast and land 'care' groups in the Coffs Harbour area. Landcare activities including Dunecare, Rivercare, Coastcare and Bushcare have been a part of the Coffs Harbour Community for over 20 years now. Over 500 volunteers have eradicated weeds, repaired riverbeds and streams, regenerated bushland, promoted environmentally friendly practices and beautified many of our parks, towns and coastlines.

Website: <http://coffsharbourlandcare.org.au/>

Illawarra Food Fairness

The alliance is made up of a broad range of organisations and individuals from the community with different interests who share a common goal of enabling access to a sustainable and healthy food supply for all. Members include Healthy Cities Illawarra, local councils, University of Wollongong, SESI Health, The Cancer Council, NSW, community centres, food aid groups and welfare services, community gardens, school garden programs and interested community members. Our key areas of interest are advocating for: food security, sustainable agriculture and food systems, the vital role of local/regional food production and supporting local welfare and community groups who work with people experiencing food insecurity.

Website: <http://www.healthycitiesill.org.au/foodfairness.htm>

State-based

Sydney Food Fairness Alliance

SFFA formed in Sydney in 2005 to coordinate the efforts of rural producers, health professionals, community workers and community-based advocates active in developing a socially, economically and environmentally sustainable food system in the Sydney region.

Website: <http://www.sydneyfoodfairness.org.au/alliance.html>

NSW Department of State and Regional Development – Food Producers program

A comprehensive program of workshops aimed at increasing skills and capacity of local food producers and processors. The program will culminate with the opportunity for producers to showcase their produce at NSW Parliament House.

Contact person: Louise Potter, Business Development Officer

Email: louise.potter@business.nsw.gov.au

National

Organic Federation of Australia

Our role is to work in co-operation with all sectors of industry and government to develop the Australian Organic Industry from a niche industry into a major component of Australian agriculture and deliver benefits to consumers, producers and the Australian environment

Website: <http://www.ofa.org.au/>

International Movements

Slow Food Movement

Slow Food is a non-profit, eco-gastronomic member-supported organization that was founded in 1989 to counteract fast food and fast life, the disappearance of local food traditions and people's dwindling interest in the food they eat, where it comes from, how it tastes and how our food choices affect the rest of the world. To do that, Slow Food brings together pleasure and responsibility, and makes them inseparable.

<http://www.slowfood.com/>

Via Campesina ("The Peasant Way")

Via Campesina is the international movement of peasants, small- and medium-sized producers, landless, rural women, indigenous people, rural youth and agricultural workers. Established in 1993 as the product of years of cultural exchanges and ongoing dialogue between small farmers and peasant organisations in both the global North and South, it seeks to defend the values and the basic interests of its members, now estimated at over 200 million people worldwide. It is an autonomous, pluralist and multicultural movement, independent of any political, economic, or other type of affiliation, with members from dozens of countries in Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas.

The principal objective of La Via Campesina is to develop solidarity and unity among small farmer organizations in order to promote gender parity and social justice in fair economic relations; the preservation of land, water, seeds and other natural resources; food sovereignty; and sustainable agricultural production based on small and medium-sized producers. La Via Campesina promotes a model of peasant or family-farm agriculture based on sustainable production with local resources and in harmony with local culture and traditions. Peasants and farmers rely on a long experience with their locally available resources. We are capable of producing the optimal quantity and quality of food with few external inputs. Our production is mainly for family consumption and domestic markets.

One of its key demands is for Food Sovereignty, defined as the RIGHT of peoples, countries, and state unions to define their agricultural and food policy without the "dumping" of agricultural commodities into foreign countries. Food sovereignty organizes food production and consumption according to the needs of local communities, giving priority to production for local consumption. Food sovereignty includes the right to protect and regulate the national agricultural and livestock production and to shield the domestic market from the dumping of agricultural surpluses and low-price imports from other countries. Landless people, peasants, and small farmers must get access to

land, water, and seed as well as productive resources and adequate public services. Food sovereignty and sustainability are a higher priority than trade policies.

Contact: Irma Yanny, Regional La Via Campesina, South East Asia & East Asia

Phone: 62 61 6842802

Email : petani@indosat.net.id

Website: http://www.viacampesina.org/main_en/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1

Transition Towns

Transition Towns (aka Transition Network, aka Transition Movement) is a movement that was founded in Kinsale, Ireland and was then spread to Totnes, England by environmentalist Rob Hopkins during 2005 and 2006. The aim of the project is to equip communities for the dual challenges of climate change and peak oil. The movement currently has member communities in a number of countries worldwide.

Website: www.transitiontowns.org

Appendix D – Key Initiatives

Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA)

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a form of agriculture which has potential for landholders with small farms located near cities or large regional centres. CSA farmers produce fresh vegetables, fruits, herbs and flowers (and sometimes meats, eggs, fibre or preserves) directly for local community members; delivering the products weekly.

This is a model of agriculture that creates a direct relationship between local consumers and local farmers, whereby the consumers enter into a contractual relationship (subscriptions) with the farmers in order to receive a weekly / fortnightly / monthly box of produce. Depending on levels of time and enthusiasm, some participating consumers may spend a few hours each week on the farm in order to help it achieve higher levels of productivity (particularly important with organic farming), and thus the exchange may be non-monetary or only partially monetary. CSA is a fast-growing movement in the United States, with numbers of CSAs expanding from 50 in 1990 to more than 1000 today.

In most CSA businesses producers and/or organising members (customers) plan a budget that includes costs of production, salaries, distribution of the food and administration. Then after determining how many members the production can support, they calculate the cost of joining. In the USA membership fees vary from US\$150 to US\$800, depending on the length of the growing season and the amount of produce supplied.

Benefits

- If sufficient numbers of local consumers participate in this model it will guarantee to the farmer a minimum income and ensure its economic sustainability into the future.
- Does not require large tracts of land or specialised machinery.
- Unique direct marketing focus which increases connections between grower and consumer, and means farmers have fewer marketing costs.
- Fresh seasonal produce available to members.
- A key concept behind CSA is that members are sharing the risk of agricultural production; by paying up front and risking that in a dry year or because of insect damage, yield may be lower than expected. (Herbs and flowers will often be added to the box during these times).
- Protects agricultural diversity - diversity of food
- Protects local farmland from urban development by helping small farms to remain economically viable.
- Reduces waste created in marketing, packaging and transport
- Farmers can focus on producing quality food through environmentally sustainable farming practices,
- CSA is not just about growing food, rather providing a service which involves delivery of food, newsletters and social functions.

Challenges

- A wide range of skills are required by the farmers such as an ability to manage a commercial fruit and vegetable farm, with a large number of crops continually at different stages of development, well developed people skills and, in most cases, a commitment to organic and/or sustainable farming practices.
- Having enough customers who are committed to the philosophy of CSA, not just interested in home delivered groceries.
- Education and promotion is a key factor in keeping members satisfied.
- Without proper understanding some members could complain if the box is a little light on one week.
- Establishing a CSA requires people with a wide range of skills - in terms of being able to farm, market, accounting etc. Perhaps we can utilise existing enterprises such as the Grower's Market to promote these services therefore taking away some of the pressures associated with this type of Model.

Further information

- Food Connect: Food Connect is a Brisbane-based model of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). It is an organisation with a focus not just on providing fabulous fresh food, but also on improving the lot of farmers, our communities and the environment. The produce from Food Connect is all sourced from within a five-hour radius of Brisbane which allows the freshness to be retained. Any green vegetables have been picked with the shortest time frame being possible between picking and delivery. They pack boxes with a mix of standard, fortnightly and seasonal produce. This means our farmers are not forced to grow out of season allowing less chemical use. One of the side benefits in developing a CSA enterprise is that our farmers can start to trial grow a huge variety of produce that over the years has disappeared from the dinner table. This has largely come about as a result of the supermarkets and large agribusiness controlling the markets for their own benefits. <http://www.foodconnect.com.au/>
- Community Supported Agriculture, A Feasibility Study for Australian Producers, Greg Cahill, et al. 2002. (Available from DPI).
- A Guide for the Establishment of Community Supported Agriculture Farms in Victoria, 2004. (Available from DPI).
- United States Department of Agriculture – National Agricultural Library. – CSA Resources for Farmers <http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/pubs/csa/csafarmer.shtml>
- Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education <http://www.sare.org/index.htm>
- Soil Association: Assistance for Community Supported Agriculture <http://www.soilassociation.org/csa>

Micro Credit for Small Scale Farms

Small scale farming enterprises bring a range of benefits from providing local food security and employment; being more efficient and productive than large-scale farming; creating strong local community networks and increased access to food which is also more equitable.

One large impediment to more people becoming involved in this aspect of the local food supply chain is the start-up costs for small scale farming projects such as market gardens. Typically, interested people will have the land available (or access to land) but are resource poor.

The provision of micro credit, low or no-interest loans to small scale farmers could be one way to overcome this barrier.

Benefits

- Relatively small amount of money can be continuously recycled into the scheme to provide access to funds for a section of the community to create food, employment and a stronger sense of community.
- People not normally able to access finance can have the opportunity to grow their business.

Challenges

- Mainstream banks have in the past struggled to make affordable small loans programs a commercially viable part of their business.
- Perceived high start-up administration costs to create a low interest loan scheme.
- Low take-up rates
- Concerns about comparatively high rates of default and risks posed by the recovery of debts.
- The administrative structures required to manage the delivery of funds and receiving of repayments.
- The current no-interest loan providers are typically focused on personal loans for low-income earners for general household items.
- The level of need for micro-financing is unquantified in Coffs Coast region, further investigation required on level of financing required by individuals and the number of individuals interested.
- Evaluation of the ability to service loan repayments varies depending on if farming enterprise is main source of income or secondary stream.

In Australia, there are a small number of commercial and not-for-profit organisations that currently provide micro financing options that the LFA could explore to identify how best to provide access by local small scale farmers to micro financing.

Further Information:

- *NAB Microenterprise Loans:* NAB Microenterprise Loans are unsecured business loans of between \$500 and \$20,000 for people on low incomes who have few or no avenues to access affordable business credit. The loans are provided on a not-for-profit basis and are available to help start up or support an existing business of five or fewer employees. Liability for the loan sits with the applicant, not the business. NAB also ensures loan recipients get access to business skills training and advice during the first year of their business.
http://www.nab.com.au/wps/wcm/connect/nab/nab/home/about_us/4/3/2
- *Tasmanian Micro-credit program:* The Micro-Credit Program is a joint program run by the Department of Economic Development, the Department of Premier and Cabinet's Women Tasmania, Mission Australia the No Interest Loan Scheme (NILS) network of Australia. The program assists people on low incomes (Health care card holders) by providing business mentoring support and small interest-free loans. A maximum loan of \$3000 may be available

to assist with business start-up or expansion.

http://www.development.tas.gov.au/business/list_of_small_business_programs_and_services/women_in_business_micro_credit_program

- *Foresters ANA Mutual Society*: Foresters has several Micro Finance activities which enable people to have more control over their money and their lives, and encourages the concept of self-help as well as helping others. Mutual funds - This is a contributory rotating loan system. Individuals deposit a minimum of \$10 per month into the fund and after 6 months are eligible for a loan of up to \$250. On a sliding scale, the maximum loan after 2 years is \$2000. These are no interest loans. New members are generally referred by current members.
- *No Interest Loan Scheme (NILS)*: Good Shepherd Sisters of Victoria support the provision of NILS® to low-income earners throughout Australia. The NILS® NSW Network was set up approx eight years ago to assist organisations in NSW with setting up and running their NILS® program. The Network also provides annual training and information forums. Community groups, such as Neighbourhood Centres or Charities, run 'No Interest Loan Schemes' (NILS®) to assist with this problem. A typical NILS® loan is around \$800 - \$1200 for whitegoods, furniture, medical appliances or any other essential household item. The Nambucca Valley Community Service Council have run a NILS from 2000. Initially, \$65,000 was allocated and has been continually recycled to allow for 265 loans for essential items totalling over \$240,000. <http://www.nilsnsw.org.au/>
- *Bendigo Bank*: Will review business financing of unsecured loans up to \$20,000 on a case by case basis.
- *USDA Farm Service Agency*
In the United States the Farm Service Agency (FSA) is a combination of agencies, one of which had its purpose providing credit to lower income, lower equity beginning farmers unable to get a loan elsewhere. This is now one of the primary purposes of the FSA, making the agency one of the first places a beginning farmer should look when needing credit. http://www.cfra.org/resources/Publications/Beg_Farmer_loan_programs.htm
- BCU: Opportunity to discuss with BCU if they would consider establishing a Micro-Credit program given that they started with local Banana Farmers pooling their dollars and helping grow the local agricultural industry.

Local Food Directory / Database

A directory of Local Food Producers to raise the profile of Coffs Coast food and beverage producers with commercial and individual consumers so that they can be more assured of a secure economic future.

A directory would provide information and access to the wealth of food and beverages being produced in the region. The directory should be a 'must have' for the region's chefs, wholesalers, shops and individual food consumers. By using this directory and supporting our local farmers, wineries and value-adders consumers are helping them to look after their futures and that of our beautiful hinterland.

The directory could be accessible either a printed or internet based searchable database (or both). Opportunities exist to link this to the Farm Gate Trail project and community education and awareness plans.

Benefits

- Local producers benefit by being promoted to new domestic and business customers.
- Consumers gain from being better informed about local food and how it is produced.
- The list of producers becomes a baseline for assessing growth in the local food sector.
- Agencies can use the directory to contact local food producers to participate in promotions and local initiatives.
- A well-produced directory can be a good “advert” for the local food sector and indeed for the overall identity of an area.
- Directories will also reach consumers and feature producers who do not attend farmers’ markets.

Challenges

- Local food directories are generally produced on fairly modest budgets, and resources for checking each entry independently are unlikely to be available.
- Finding and verifying content of entries.
- Some directories include a “self-verifying” condition by which all businesses with an entry must be open to inspection by customers, and/or phone queries about production methods, origin of fattening stock or ingredients, etc.
- The budget for a directory will need to cover for printing, distribution, and postage as well as collation of the information.
- Keeping the directory information up-to-date on an on-going basis.

Further Information:

- *Maroochy Enterprising Food*: Directory of Food & Beverage Producers in the Maroochy Hinterland. Developed by the Maroochy Rural Enterprise Project Manager, Economic Development Branch Maroochy Shire Council. www.businessmaroochy.com/mrep
- *Big Barn*: A UK site that aims to link consumers with producers through a searchable database and interactive map (based on Google maps) <http://www.bigbarn.co.uk/> . Also provides info on seasonal produce, recipes.
- *Hawkesbury Harvest*: Regional Produce Guide available on the internet which lists info about the producer, when the product is in season and where to find them on the map or where to buy the produce if not at the farm. Other details such as facilities and opening times if part of the Farm Gate Trail. <http://hawkesburyharvest.com.au/home.asp>
- *The Sunshine Coast Local Harvest*: An online, searchable database of fine food & produce. There are over 100 listings of local food and wine producers. Local Harvest has been designed and created as an initiative by Petra Frieser who runs a small Sunshine Coast based business dedicated to supporting the local community. <http://www.localharvest.com.au/>

Farm Gate Trail

The Farm Gate Trail is a marketing initiative that aims to promote and strengthen our local Food Sector, whilst creating greater tourist numbers to the Coffs Coast Hinterland through encouraging the local and outside tourist market to explore more of the Hinterland region. Would involve a map with suggested tour route and the list of participating farms and their details.

Benefits

- Increase consumer access to nutritious, safe foods while developing the opportunity for agri-based tourism
- Encourage Farmers to diversify and potentially yield an income from the tourist industry therefore increasing the viability of their land.
- Making the general public more aware of what our region has to offer and the benefits involved in supporting the local agricultural industry.

Challenges

- Balancing the needs and time of the farmer with regards to growing and selling / attending farm gate sales or tours.

Further Information

- *Hawkesbury Harvest Farm Gate Trail*: A Tourism venture aimed to increase tourism and consumption of local produce in the area. Interactive and Downloadable maps of the region that highlight farms open to the public, wine trail, accommodation, pick your own. <http://hawkesburyharvest.com.au/home.asp>
- *Margaret River Food and Wine Trail*: A project of the Margaret River Regional Producers Association. Includes info on Farm Gate and Cellar door sales as well as local produce available at retail outlets and restaurants. <http://www.margaretriver.asn.au/Food%20and%20Wine%20Trail>
- *Mornington Peninsula Gourmet From Harvest to Table*: A Food Trail map and guide providing info about food producers, accommodation and dining experiences. http://www.mpgourmet.com.au/pdf/MPG_FoodMap08.pdf
- *Tropical Tastes Food and Wine Trail*: The Walkamin/Mareeba section of the Atherton Tablelands in Queensland is classed as the Food & Wine Trail area. There are a variety of wineries, distilleries and coffee plantations involved. Appears most info on this is available only from the Tourist Information Centre as the website only has a written description of the trail. <http://www.athertontablelands.com.au/pages/tropical-tastes-food-wine-trail/>
- *South Burnett Wine and Food Trail*: The South Burnett features some of the largest vineyards and wineries in Queensland through to smaller boutique cellar doors and distilleries. With over thirteen cellar doors in the region there is a wide variety of properties for guests to visit. The Trail comprises of a map indicating the various wineries located in the region. <http://www.tourism.southburnett.com.au/mapwine.htm>
- *Niagara Culinary Trail*: A Canadian example of a culinary trail which has a map, events, directory. <http://www.niagaraculinarytrail.com>

Buy Local – Branding of Local Produce

The creation of a local brand would provide consumers with the assurance that they are supporting the local food industry by purchasing quality Coffs Coast produce and products that are made from local ingredients.

A co-ordinated and comprehensive consumer marketing campaign would support the program and ensure consumer confidence in the label. Some regions have included a design competition to develop the logo as a way of raising awareness.

Benefits

- Growers and producers able to meet customer demand for clearly labelled products and reduce doubt or confusion in the market place.
- Provide a point of product differentiation from imported products.

Challenges

- Certification or verification of product claims.
- The integrity of the logo or brand is dependent on the claims being made by growers.
- Community awareness of the benefits of buying local.
- Accessibility, the more convenient it is to buy local the more people will opt to buy Coffs Coast rather than from somewhere else.

Further Information:

- *Buy West, Eat Best*: A scheme aimed at providing Western Australian consumers and the WA food industry with a food-specific brand to clearly identify food products that are indeed Western Australian. <http://www.buywesteatbest.wa.gov.au>
- *Food Barossa*: Food Barossa is a regional food brand that has been developed by a local group of enthusiastic food producers and consumers. These people use the Food Barossa brand to promote the region's distinctive food. <http://www.foodbarossa.com/home.html>
- *Flavours of King Island*: have developed an awareness of their food products. The name King Island has become synonymous with high quality dairy and beef products as well as seafood. <http://www.kingisland.org.au/Default.asp?ID=7>
- *Local food not a key purchase driver for majority*, Daniel Palmer March 13, 2009. Australian Food News <http://www.ausfoodnews.com.au/2009/03/13/local-food-not-a-key-priority-for-majority.html>
- *Mornington Peninsula Gourmet*: The Mornington Peninsula Gourmet (MPGourmet) regional food group has developed the MPGourmet logo to help tourists and locals explore the gourmet produce the Mornington Peninsula has to offer. <http://www.mpgourmet.com.au/gourmetproduce.asp>
- Buy Local Branding opportunity to link or use the existing Coffs Coast Tourism Brand. There is already a Coffs Coast Brand with the slogan at the bottom 'Field, Farm and Ocean Fresh'.

- Buy Fresh, Buy Local Food Routes Network is a non-profit organization based in Pennsylvania that provides communications tools, organizing support, and marketing resources to our grassroots chapters throughout the US that are working to rebuild local food systems and promote sustainable agriculture. Buy Fresh Buy Local chapters are connecting consumers in communities throughout the country to the freshest, most delicious locally grown and produced foods available. Through outreach events, local food guides, and educational materials, Buy Fresh, Buy Local makes it easy for consumers to find and connect with local food from farmers they can know and trust. <http://www.foodroutes.org/buy-fresh-buy-local.jsp>
- Journey of Flavours: is a brand for the Hastings Region of NSW, which represents quality products and services in the food and beverage sector. It is an accreditation program for businesses and a promotional campaign to raise awareness.

Seasonal Produce Guide

A seasonal produce guide is another way of raising consumer awareness of what fruits and vegetables they can expect to be in bountiful supply in their local markets. Most seasonal produce guides are linked to other regional initiatives such as Local Food Directories, Buy Local Brands or Food and Wine Trails.

Benefits

- Raises consumer awareness about seasonal produce.
- Creates an acceptance of the availability of fruit and vegetables at different times of the year.
- Reconnects people with their local farmers.
- Reduces expectations of being able to eat any produce whenever consumers desire.
- Increases consumer awareness about what can be grown in the region.

Challenges

- Collating the information initially
- Providing different access points for this information for a range of target markets.
- The Seasonal guides from the large markets (e.g. Sydney and Melbourne) provide info on produce that may be in season in any part of Australia. Not specifically local information.

Further Information:

- *Sydney Markets*: Sydney Markets supply quality fresh fruit & vegetable. The seasonal brochures below will give you top tips, quick meals, best buys and nutritional advice for fruit and vegetables in season. Brochures available in PDF http://www.sydneymarkets.com.au/documents/Seasonal/2009_Autumn_Fresh_Seasonal_Guide.pdf
- Market Fresh: Market Fresh is a business established by the Melbourne Market Authority (MMA) in 2005. The MMA is responsible for managing the Melbourne Markets, the state of Victoria's central wholesale market for fruit, vegetables and flowers. An online planner automatically identifies items that are in season (anywhere in Australia) for the period you select. http://www.marketfresh.com.au/produce_guide/seasons.asp

- Hawkesbury Harvest: An interactive calendar on the website that lists type of produce, seasonal information and supplier details.
http://hawkesburyharvest.com.au/farmgate_seasonal.asp
- *Mornington Peninsula*: The MPGourmet Seasonal Produce Guide gives you all the essentials at a glance. Lists the MPGourmet members that grow and make each type of produce, when it is in season and links to their contact details. Online searchable database.
<http://www.mpgourmet.com.au/productSeasonGuide.asp>

Food Processing

The growing internationalisation of food retail and processing presents significant opportunities and threats for Australia's food processing and manufacturing industry. It is predicted that five supermarket chains will dominate world food retail within a few years.

Increasingly, food is purchased in pre-prepared combinations, such as ready-to-eat lasagne or salad with dressing. This trend will see states import more of their own inputs from overseas or interstate unless local companies can adapt to meet local demand.

As large-scale international supply chains develop, niche markets for speciality foods are also growing rapidly. A large market is growing for organic or clean and green' products. Niche markets of this kind can themselves be very large and still have the same year-round reliability of supply requirements of the mainstream supply chains.

Food processing has the potential to increase impact in the regional economy and could be conducted on a small to medium scale on the Coffs Coast. The opportunities include such diverse components as: meat processing; cheese processing; yoghurt and other milk products; small goods processing and canning; fish processing; secondary processing of horticulture products such as potatoes.

There are a range of potential areas that could be developed such as business enterprises for new migrants to produce traditional sauces using local produce, a cooperative commercial kitchen to help start up costs for new value added products; cold storage facilities to support an expanding food sector.

Benefits

- Increase efficiency and reduce wastage of seasonal produce.
- Increase jobs and diversify regional economy.
- A small percentage increase in food processing results in a large increase in revenue and new job creation.
- Potential for expansion of regional produce into the high profile gourmet niche markets.
- Diversity of the food production sector presents opportunities for development in packaged foods such as gourmet meals.
- Development of these organic products developed and sold in different forms will generate new market potential.
- There is potentially a niche market for restaurants that are willing to develop the concept of "value adding" further. Participating restaurants could be promoted as part of the local tourist industry for that region and could feature 'the valued added' produce as part of their menu.

Challenges

- Currently food processing is a small cottage industry in the region.
- Skills and knowledge of growers is limited.
- Growers are not necessarily interested in value adding to their products.
- New businesseslack the skills...
- Increased focus on employee training in the food processing and manufacturing sector will provide benefits in terms of improved food safety and quality assurance.
- Food retail outlets, particularly supermarkets, continue to demand more stringent food safety requirements than even those mandated by government. Early adoption of high standards will give local products market advantage and deliver enhanced consumer benefit.
- The capacity of industry to access appropriate new technologies is vital. Niche industries generally have to develop manufacturing technologies specific to products by modifying technologies from major industries or developing one-off' equipment.
- Markets for processed food products are likely to grow based on a continuing expansion of demand from restaurants and fast-food outlets for pre-prepared ingredients. There is also strong consumer demand for home-cooking convenience.

Further information:

- *Outback Pride*: The Outback Pride Project is promoting the Australian native food industry by developing a network of production sites within traditional Aboriginal communities. The cultivation of Australian native food provides indigenous Australians with jobs and training in horticulture and the food industry. In this way, the project also acknowledges the intellectual property of the traditional uses of bush foods. <http://www.outbackpride.com.au/project/>
- *Food Processing and Supply: Queensland Government site.*
<http://www.industry.qld.gov.au/dsdweb/v4/apps/web/content.cfm?id=5476>
- *Brendan Lethlean: The Potential of Value Added Organic Produce in the Mainstream Marketplace* ISS Institute Inc, February 2008
http://www.issinstitute.org.au/pdfs/report_execsum_lethlean.pdf

Community Education and Awareness Raising

Local Food Groups or associations are primarily involved in the development and organisation of a range of education and awareness raising activities aimed at increasing consumer knowledge and participation in the local food supply chain.

Activities include:

- Opportunities for Networking e.g. Social Networking sites
- Newsletters
- Films Events
- Local Food Dinners
- Swap shops
- Event Calendar
- General Information Sharing

This can be achieved through the regular activities of the group as well as through other media such as websites, newspapers, radio campaigns etc. Refer to other sections for detailed info e.g. Food Groups, Seasonal Produce Guide.

Benefits

- Increase in awareness creates an increase in demand for local food.
- People are armed with more information to make more informed choices about food consumption.
- Increased awareness may lead to increased participation in events, programs such as the community gardens.

Challenges

- Wide range of demographics for the target audience are hard to reach in a uniform manner, will require a range of approaches to be used.

Further Information

- Examples are mostly generated from Local Food networks such as Illawarra Food Fairness, Sydney Food Fairness Alliance.

Food Groups / Associations / Alliances / Networks

Growers and producers around Australia have formed themselves into organisations that aim to promote local produce and products. These are varied organisations that have similar aims and purposes but may be formed from different beginnings such as tourism or sustainability. Sydney and Illawarra Alliances came from a primary focus of food security.

Their aims are generally to:

- Promote a regional identity for local products.
- Encourage new regional producers or processors into the market.
- Marketing of the regions products to locals, Australia and Internationally.
- Encourage and assist in the growing, breeding, production and or manufacture of produce in the specific areas.

The groups achieve these aims through a range of activities from being involved in the Local Growers Markets, hosting Long Lunches, providing awards promoting the use of local produce, event calendars, information networks, Movie nights, local food dinners, newsletters and other events.

Benefits

- Provides a focal point for all activities and knowledge sharing.
- Allows the group to tap into the particular skills of individuals or organisations.
- A central group of people committed to one overall vision.

- Contributes to a more networked and close nit community.
- Provides the opportunity to seek funding for specific projects.

Challenges

- Coordination of the group requires time and resources.
- Difficult to depend exclusively on volunteers for an extended period of time.
- The structure of the group and how it functions needs to reflect the local needs.

Further Information

- *Bellingen Local Food Network* The Bellingen Local Food Network was founded in November 2007 by a group of Bellingen residents motivated by the need to work together co-operatively to maximise the production, distribution and consumption of locally-produced non-chemical fruit and vegetables.
- *Mornington Peninsula Gourmet*: MPGourmet is a regional food group that has grown from small beginnings in November 2000. Initially started as a local tourism association, MPGourmet has expanded its role to provide network opportunities for wholesale business and industry development. Membership has grown markedly and the rapid increase is set to continue with the exploding interest in quality food experiences and the realization that MPGourmet is helping to create this interest. MPGourmet is now a dynamic local tourism association with a diverse membership including primary producers, food manufacturers, boutique caterers, restaurants & cafes, gourmet retail outlets, and others passionate about the wonderful food of the Mornington Peninsula. <http://www.mpgourmet.com.au/>
- *Margaret River Regional Producers Association*: A tourism and marketing tool. http://www.margaretriver.com/accom_result1/margaret-river-regional-producers-association/
- *Illawarra Food Fairness*: The alliance is made up of a broad range of organisations and individuals from the community with different interests who share a common goal of enabling access to a sustainable and healthy food supply for all. Members include Healthy Cities Illawarra, local councils, University of Wollongong, SESI Health, The Cancer Council, NSW, community centres, food aid groups and welfare services, community gardens, school garden programs and interested community members. Our key areas of interest are advocating for: food security, sustainable agriculture and food systems, the vital role of local/regional food production and supporting local welfare and community groups who work with people experiencing food insecurity. <http://www.healthycitiesill.org.au/foodfairness.htm>
- *Sydney Food Fairness Alliance*: SFFA formed in Sydney in 2005 to coordinate the efforts of rural producers, health professionals, community workers and community-based advocates active in developing a socially, economically and environmentally sustainable food system in the Sydney region. <http://www.sydneyfoodfairness.org.au/alliance.html>
- *Community Harvest Project* The Community Harvest Project is an initiative of the Hills Organic Box Scheme (HOBS) and the Yarra Valley Permaculture Group. The Project will work with individuals and groups to identify and map existing local food resources, increase the supply of local, sustainably produced food and connect people with the resources they need, to ensure access to healthy, affordable food, for everyone. http://www.communityharvestproject.org.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2&Itemid=3
- *Network for Sustainable and Diversified Agriculture*: The Network for Sustainable and Diversified Agriculture is not for profit organization. The purpose of the network is to collectively coordinate, promote and advocate activities and

information that will assist in the implementation of the principles of sustainable and diversified agriculture, to benefit the economic, environmental and social development of North Queensland. The Network for Sustainable and Diversified Agriculture (NSDA) has adopted the cluster principle for its operations and information dissemination. The structure and function of the Network is reliant mainly on member volunteers who are supported by a Management Committee made up of representatives of a number of Cluster Groups, each of which represents one specific focus of the Network. The Cluster Groups include Tropical Foods, Biotechnology, Cut Flower and Native Foliage, Organic Producers, Forestry, Research, Education, Marketing and Value Adding, Conservation, and Commerce www.nsga.org.au

Edible Gardens – Permablitz

Fritz Haeg initiated the first Edible Estate in the USA on 4 July 2005. He is an architect and artist whose project proposed the replacement of the domestic front lawn with a highly productive edible landscape. The planting of a regional prototype garden was in the geographic centre of the United States, Salina, Kansas. Since then three more prototype gardens have been created, two in the States and one in London.

Many Councils around Australia provide programs that support residents in the conversion of front and backyards into edible gardens. The assistance ranges from:

- Information sheets on gardening, composting, worm farms etc
- Workshops on how to create vegetable patches e.g. no-dig gardens
- Competitions for best Eco/Vegetable Garden

Permablitz is a structured form of assistance that started in April 2006 with a collaboration between permaculture students and a South American community group in the South-Eastern suburbs of Melbourne, Australia. Since then, over 40 permablitzes have been held and permablitz has gained an international reputation as a successful tool for fast-tracking the suburbs towards sustainability.

A permablitz is: an informal gathering involving a day on which a group of at least two people come together to achieve the following:

- create or add to edible gardens where someone lives
- share skills related to permaculture and sustainable living
- build community networks
- have fun

Each permablitz is part of a longer process including a pre-blitz design visit or visits, prior organisation of materials needed for the blitz, and after the blitz follow up visits to see how people are going with their new gardens. This means that permablitzes stay true to permaculture design, which is always an extended process in which all action is informed by prior observation and reflection.

Benefits

- Greater access to fresh fruits and vegetables to the wider community
- Increased understanding of seasonal foods

Challenges

- Coordination time required
- Skills base for coordinators not only includes horticulture/permaculture but also management of community groups.
- Resource intensive

Further Information

- *US Agriculture Department:* Feb 2009 started its own garden, one that will include fruits and vegetables to be donated to the city's soup kitchens. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack jack hammered a spot in the black asphalt outside the Whitten building to prepare the ground. It is part of an effort by the Obama administration to get people to grow some of their own food. 19 February 2009. <http://www.energybulletin.net/node/48162>
- *Greater Dandenong Edible Gardens:* The project helps individuals, and families set up their own edible home gardens. The project gives advice on how to design your garden to minimise water use and make it more environmentally friendly. It is a great opportunity for people to produce cheap home grown vegetables, herbs and fruit. Experts provide the advice and skills needed to design a great food garden using sustainable living principles. Events, like a 'backyard blitz', are organised where family, friends, neighbours and volunteers come together to build the food garden and spend time together, making it a great a great way to meet people from the local community. The project is sponsored by Dandenong Development Board in partnership with the City of Greater Dandenong, Sustainability Victoria and the Department of Planning and Community Development. www.dandenong.permablitz.net
- *Gold Coast City Council:* Garden Competition, One category is for Eco/Vegetable Gardens which is sponsored by Gold Coast City Council Waste Management Unit Gardens/vegetable gardens that are eco-friendly, self sufficient and sustainable e.g.: gardens that reuse, recycle, compost, worm farm and use companion gardening. http://www.goldcoast.qld.gov.au/t_news_item.aspx?pid=6172
- *Permablitz* <http://www.permablitz.net/>

Food Production on Public Land

The conversion of public land or existing public ornamental gardens to plants that provide food, herbs or medicinal properties. Produce is distributed amongst the individuals or organisations who maintain the land or given to charity groups.

There are numerous ways of converting public land into food production. For example, a communal garden on a roadside verge with all neighbours taking what they need. This can be supported by the neighbours with things such as a "Garden Tool Library" where neighbours share gardening equipment rather than buying it.

Benefits

- Emphasises the importance of re-localisation of food production in the global context of peak oil and climate change
- Highlights the benefits of backyard food growing as a measure to improve personal sustainability (including composting)
- Showcases the benefits of eating locally and seasonally
- Provides information about organic methods of food production.
- Increased access / affordability of healthy foods for disadvantaged groups

Challenges

- Potentially increases maintenance required of the garden beds.
- Vandalism of unattended, unprotected sites.
- Coordination of volunteer groups to maintain the vegetable patches.
- Support from owners of public land (Councils, State or Federal Government)
- Costs involved in verge side vegetable patches and arguments over produce (see Cottesloe)

Further Information

- *Edible Landscapes*: The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects has developed guidelines on creating Edible Landscapes. <http://www.aila.org.au/sustainablecanberra/005-fern/guide.htm>
- *Food Production on Public Land Project*: Byron Shire Council's has developed a which aims to trial the replacement of standard ornamental landscaping plants with edible species as a model to assist in the re-localisation of our food systems and provide an alternative to global, corporate food distribution systems. The Project also encourages householders to grow more in the backyard. More information about the project can be found at: www.byron.nsw.gov.au/foodproduction
- *Djanbung Gardens*: A botanic gardens of useful, economic and cultural plants within a working permaculture system. Public Landscapes around the main building are designed as edible landscapes and to support the passive solar functions of the building. Mulch meadows provide important open space for recreation and events, and are a constant source of mulch for gardens and green feed for the animals. http://www.permaculture.com.au/central/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=82:edible-landscapes-a-gardens&catid=66&Itemid=79
- *Geelong Botanical Garden*: http://www.geelongcity.vic.gov.au/Visiting_Geelong/Parks_and_Gardens/Geelong_Botanic_Gardens/The_Edible_Garden/
- *Cottesloe Council: Concerns over management of verge side vegetable patches* <http://slowfoodaustralia.com.au/2008/11/cottesloe-verge-o-crats-propose-vegetable-tax/>

Wholesale Market or Regular Produce Market

Wholesale markets are where growers send or take their produce for sale to greengrocers and other fresh retailers, restaurants, wholesalers and provedores. Most central markets operate during the early hours of the morning so that produce can be delivered out fresh each day to meet consumers needs for market fresh produce.

Coffs Harbour could capitalise on its central location between Sydney and Brisbane to create a local wholesale market that services an area from Port Macquarie to Byron.

Benefits

- Increased turnover of local produce into our local markets.
- Attraction of external buyers and sellers into the region.
- Reduced transportation of fresh produce

Challenges

- Effect on existing markets and wholesalers
- Potentially large capital expenditure to establish
- Feasibility study required to identify capacity of local producers to service a larger wholesale market

Further Information

- Sydney Markets: <http://www.sydneymarkets.com.au>
- Melbourne Market Authority: <http://www.melbournemarkets.com.au>
- Sunshine Coast Regional Council feasibility Study : <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/09/12/2362798.htm?site=sunshine>

Local Food Co-operative

Food Cooperatives are generally produce stores set up as consumers cooperatives. A consumers' cooperative is a cooperative business owned by its customers for their mutual benefit. It is a form of free enterprise that is oriented toward service rather than pecuniary profit. The customers or consumers of the goods and/or services the business provides are often also the individuals who have provided the capital required to launch or purchase that enterprise.

Large consumers' co-ops are run much like any other business and require workers, managers, clerks, products, and customers to keep the doors open and the business running. In smaller businesses the consumer/owners are often workers as well. Consumers' cooperatives can differ greatly in start up and also in how the co-op is run.

Benefits

- An outlet for locally grown produce

- Increase accessibility and affordability of fresh produce
- Co-ops use the collective resources of its members to achieve the running of our store.

Challenges

- Impact on existing for-profit enterprises
- Dependent on the energy and enthusiasm of members.
- Investigation into the feasibility of a Food Cooperative required to gauge interest and sustainability of an enterprise.
- Management of the cooperative subject to normal issues faced by democratic systems.

Further Information

- University of Sydney: <http://www.usydfoodcoop.org.au>
- Newtown: www.alfalfahouse.org
- University of NSW <http://thoughtfulfoods.org.au>
- Manly: www.manlyfoodcoop.org
- Katoomba www.bluemtnsfood.asn.au

Linking Local Producers with Local Restaurants

Increasing the awareness of local chefs as to locally available produce and increasing access to that produce is one key way of strengthening the local food supply chain.

Ways this is done include:

- Expos
- Showcase Lunches e.g. Long Lunch Events
- Buyers Group to liaise between growers and restaurants

Benefits

- Chefs have increased knowledge about locally grown produce, when it is in season and how best to use it.
- Increased consumption of local produce in our restaurants.

Challenges

- Raising awareness does not address the issues of ease of access to produce. Chefs prefer to deal with one supplier (i.e. Wholesaler)
- Restaurants require continuity of supply and quality of supply to match their menus and customer expectations.

Further Information

- *Gate to Plate Event*: Clarence Valley Council
http://www.clarence.nsw.gov.au/content/uploads/080715_food_industry_to_flourish.pdf

School Based Vegetable Gardens

Support the uptake and ongoing use of school based vegetable gardens in our region.

Benefits

- A chance to positively influence children's food choices
- Encourages healthy eating habits from an early age
- Life-long skills in the kitchen and garden
- Introduction to and appreciation of fresh seasonal food
- Socialisation through team work, sharing a meal and working with volunteers
- Practical understanding of environmental sustainability
- Understanding the link between good food choices and optimum health
- Active, hands-on activity and exercise

Challenges

- Establishment costs and ongoing maintenance
- Participation by schools tends to be dependent on enthusiasm of individual teachers
- Competing with an already full timetable and requirements to link clearly into Key Learning Areas.

Further Information

- *Stephanie Alexanders Kitchen Garden Program*: Funding for the development of both food gardens and kitchen facilities within schools. The Government will provide grants of up to \$60,000 per school participating in the program to cover infrastructure costs associated with building kitchens and gardens. The next round of grants is expected to open in mid-2009. <http://www.healthyactive.gov.au/internet/healthyactive/publishing.nsf/Content/kitchen-garden>
- Kitchen Garden Foundation www.kitchengardenfoundation.org.au

Centre for Small Scale Farming and Local Food Systems

An educational resource centre to assist local farmers and strengthen the local food system. Aim of this centre would be for the Coffs Coast to become recognised as a research centre and teaching facility that sources the latest information, researches case studies and provides access to research into best practice in local food economies.

This information will assist our local growers and the model can then be shared with other regions and also potentially become a destination for students from outside the area.

There are a wide range of areas this type of centre could explore, for example:

- Small Scale Farm management (including skill sets such as marketing, production, management, distribution etc)

- Value Adding
- Food Safety
- Food Processing
- Organic Agriculture and Permaculture
- Soil Improvements
- Bio-Char
- Post Harvest Handling
- Cooperatives

Potential Partners include:

- Department of Primary Industry
- Catchment Management Authority
- NCI TAFE
- Southern Cross University
- Community Colleges
- Biodynamics Australia
- Landcare Groups e.g. Bellingen Landcare and their Small Farm Network

Benefits

- Creates a centre of knowledge that can be a focal point for the industry.
- Improved access by local stakeholders

Challenges

- Identification of the educational needs of farmers, processors etc.
- Resources and staffing
- Infrastructure requirements
- Long-term commitment to create the centre.

Further Information

- *Small Farms Centre*. Based in California their vision is a Californian agriculture in which small and family farms remain a dynamic, viable component of the communities in which they operate. <http://www.sfc.ucdavis.edu/default.asp>
- *Centre for Information on Low External Input and Sustainable Agriculture*: ILEIA finds, documents and publishes experiences on sustainable, small-scale farming. We believe experiences of this kind are important. After all, many people, especially in developing countries, depend on agriculture for their living. Their combined knowledge can help improve productivity, generate income, and empower farmers. Through LEISA Magazine, which has more than 17,000 subscribers, ILEIA reaches people in 150 countries. ILEIA is part of the global LEISA Network, whose member organisations all gather and share knowledge on sustainable small-scale farming. <http://ileia.leisa.info/>
- [Biological Farmers of Australia \(BFA\)](#) BFA is a not-for-profit organisation working on behalf of its members. The website provides details on training courses and workshops, latest industry research, how to get certified and a growing database for consumers on where to buy organic produce.

- [Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation \(RIRDC\)](#) RIRDC is the Australian Government's Organic Produce Research Program aims to promote the adoption of sustainable organic farming systems. The site provides details on research results and fact sheets.
- [The National Association of Sustainable Agriculture, Australia \(NASAA\)](#) NASAA is Australia's largest organic certifier, a non-profit company limited by guarantee comprised of members and certified operators. The site outlines steps on how to get certified, export requirements, information sheets and a product database of certified members.
- [The Organic Federation of Australia \(OFA\)](#) OFA is the peak body for the Australian organic sector. Growers can subscribe to a free monthly electronic newsletter, find out how to get certified, and lists details of any upcoming events and conferences on organic farming and related subjects.

Urban Planning For Local Food Systems

The possibilities of using the planning system for local food production outcomes are not immediately apparent. Traditionally, Planners within Councils (particularly smaller regional Councils) have focused upon the core functions of assessing Development Applications and writing plans that the applications are assessed against. Planning Departments do not manage the use of Council infrastructure or land and do not usually have budgets to undertake works.

There is however a growing movement that sees planners and the planning system as well suited to pursuing local food production opportunities. Planners are accustomed to consulting with numerous government agencies, consulting with the community and consulting with other departments within Councils. Therefore, they are well positioned to embark upon the interdisciplinary work needed to entrench local food production as a more central matter across the whole spectrum of community and government. As town planning evolved out of the need to ensure public health by separation of incompatible land uses, it could also be argued that it is now time for planning to recognise the threats that exist to future food supply and in the interests of public health, act to provide greater levels of food security for local communities.

There are numerous opportunities to explore such as setting aside land for food gardens in new development (similar to land being identified for car parking, clothes drying etc.), the collection of section 94 Contributions for community infrastructure related to local food production (e.g. a Community Garden) and the protection of land with high agricultural potential from development that may prevent its current or future use for that purpose.

Benefits

- Educates people as to importance of local food production when undertaking development.
- Introduces concept of local food production as a core site planning matter to be considered when undertaking new development.
- Provides an ongoing funding source for progressive installation of food production infrastructure.
- Can be linked with other educational activities regarding health and sustainability that Council may be undertaking.

Challenges

- Is only enacted when development occurs and therefore low development rates prevent uptake.
- Perceptions of additional cost or constraints on development.

Further Information

- Bellingen Shire Council; Draft Shire wide Development Control Plan will be on public exhibition from Thursday 3 June 2010 until Friday 2 July 2010 – view at: <http://www.bellingen.nsw.gov.au/council/5638/8204.html>
- The CHESS Principles for Healthy Environments; An holistic and strategic game-plan for inter-sectoral policy and action. *Susan Thompson and Peter McCue*. Paper advocates inter-sectoral approach to creating healthy environments with reference to the importance of connected environments, healthy eating environments, safe environments and sustainable environments. Paper can be downloaded from PCAL website; http://www.pcal.nsw.gov.au/resources/evidence_papers.html
- *Creating Supportive Environments for Healthy Eating*, QLD Health , 2006

Farm Clusters and Farm Business Centres

Farm clusters are individually operated farms that are co-located within the same boundary. The Cluster is developed to share infrastructure, running costs, and expertise. This is similar to the Business Park concept in urban areas.

Farm Business Centres would provide business services specifically for farmers in the Cluster. Services would include finances, marketing, labour pool, machinery pool, business advice etc. The Centre would be owned by the farmers in the Cluster.

Benefits

- Sharing of resources reducing individual investment
- Sharing of skills and knowledge to increase profit across all farms
- Provide greater opportunities for employment in the regional economy
- Increased connection between farmers

Challenges

- Gaining interest from farmers.
- Complexity of structures or perceived equity of process.

Further Information

- Furracabad Farm Cluster Project
<http://www.ruralfutures.une.edu.au/projects/3.php?nav=Environmental%20Impacts%20of%2>

[OChange&page=27](#) Institute for Rural Futures, University of New England. Dr Graham Marshall
Phone: (02) 6773 3250 Email: gmarshal@une.edu.au

- Julian Lee, Biodynamic Farmer Hunter Valley Phone: 0403 013 366 Email: imagoforest@gmail.com

Food Systems Assessment

A Food Systems Assessment (FSA) is a practical and policy-oriented process that creates a locally-generated and locally-owned evidence and knowledge base of the key components and status of a local or regional food system. It creates a base-line of data that can be used to inform actions and policies in a range of sectors, and be monitored over time to track changes in the status of the food system.

The idea of a 'food system' brings together all the individuals, institutions and practices around food and agriculture that are currently fragmented across multiple spheres of government, business and society. Thus, a 'food system' is said to embrace the entirety of the practices and institutions connected with the five 'spheres' of the system: *production* (agriculture / horticulture / education), *processing* (manufacture / value-adding), *distribution* (transport / storage / wholesale / retail / markets / restaurants), *consumption* (cooking / food security / diet-related ill-health / education) and *waste management* (composting / recycling / land-fill).

The aim of a Food System Assessment is:

- To provide a 'comprehensive picture of the current state of the food system'
- To 'increase community awareness of and participation in food-related projects'
- To 'set priorities and goals to improve the local food system'

Benefits

- Food security – promote understanding how the food system does or does not contribute to the health and well-being of the community;
- Local / regional economic development – support greater consumption of local / regional produce;
- Preserve the region's agricultural 'foodshed';
- Public education, awareness-raising and capacity building;
Support regional food production initiatives (e.g. enhance the viability of small & medium-sized farmers); and
- Reduce waste in the food system.

Challenges

- Data collection is resource intensive.
- Setting appropriate indicators and developing data collection methods to obtain the required information
- Gathering participation from key stakeholders, especially those with access to relevant data

Further Information

- British Columbia Guide to Food Systems Assessments (2007)
- Oakland Food Systems Assessment (2006)

Food Policy Council

A Food Policy Council (FPC) consists of a group of representatives and stakeholders, ideally from the five sectors of the food system.

These representatives often include food justice advocates, educators, non-profit organisations, concerned citizens, government officials, farmers, grocers, chefs, workers, food processors and distributors.

FPCs create an opportunity for discussion and strategy development among these various interests, and create an arena for studying the food system as a whole.

One of the main aims of a FPC is to overcome the fragmentation of Food Policy across multiple sectors: e.g. transport, health, education, agriculture, development, and social security.

Generally their purpose is to identify and propose innovative solutions to improve local or state food systems, spurring local economic development and making food systems more environmentally sustainable & socially just. They provide the following functions:

- A forum for discussing food issues;
- Fosters coordination between diverse sectors;
- Evaluates and influences policy; and
- Launches or supports programs and services that address local and regional needs

Benefits

- improved public health through improved access to fresh food, and to a better quality of food;
- capacity to impact and shape state and national policy;
- achieves functional coherence across disparate sectors;
- mainstream local food policy; and
- boost local economies & combat poverty

More information:

- Food Policy Councils: Lessons Learned Alethea Harper, Annie Shattuck, Eric Holt-Gimenez, Alison Alkon, Frances Lambrick, FoodFirst, www.foodfirst.org;
http://www.foodfirst.org/files/pdf/Food_Policy_Councils_Report_small.pdf

Appendix E – Endnotes

¹ACF (2008, p.vi)

² Rosset, P., 2000, **Lessons from the Green Revolution**, FoodFirst Institute for Food and Development Policy, <http://www.foodfirst.org/media/opeds/2000/4-greenrev.html>. The cost-price squeeze leads to a dynamic of 'get big or get out', hence the number of farms in the US has declined by two-thirds since World War II – over 4 million farmers have abandoned their businesses - while average farm size has doubled during the same period; see also Aglieri, M., 2005, **The Myth of Coexistence: Why Transgenic Crops Are Not Compatible with Agro-ecologically Based Systems of Production**, *Bulletin of Science, Technology and Society* 25(4), 361-371, 366

³ In **Australian Agriculture: Its History and its Challenges** (CSIRO Publishing, Collingwood), Ted Henzell notes the impacts of this 'cost-price squeeze': Australian farmers 'by 1999-2000...needed to produce more than four times the volume to earn, in real terms, only just over half of what they had done in 1951-52": ix-x.

⁴ Lagura, E., and Ronan, G., 2009, **How Profitable is Farm Business in Australia? An interpretation of ABARE broadacre and dairy industries' farm performance data and some implications for public policy**, http://www.agrifood.info/connections/2009/Lagura_Ronan.html.

⁵ Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics (2008)

⁶ The Australian government has been conducting a comprehensive review of drought policy, examining trends in recent decades and making projections. In July 2008 a team of scientists from CSIRO and the Bureau of Meteorology released *An Assessment of the Impact of Climate Change on the Nature and Frequency of Exceptional Climate Events*, available at: http://www.daff.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/721285/csiro-bom-report-future-droughts.pdf.

⁷ Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, **National Agriculture & Climate Change Action Plan: 2006-2009**, <http://www.daff.gov.au/climatechange>.

⁸ The latest figures from the ABS are for 2004-5. Total 'use' was actually 80,000 gigalitres, but 75% of this was returned to the environment. After agriculture, the next biggest consumers are households and the water supply industry (each 11%), followed by other industries (7.4%), manufacturing (3%) and mining (2%). Due to the reduction in rice and cotton crops agriculture's share fell 14% between 2000-2005, whilst mining industry consumption increased by 29%: <http://www.nwc.gov.au/www/html/236-water-use-in-australia.asp>.

⁹ <http://www.coffsharbour.nsw.gov.au/www/html/1583-climate-change.asp>.

¹⁰ For example, the average price of a litre of petrol in Queensland rose from 51 cents in 1986 to \$1.22 in 2009, with a spike to \$1.43 and \$1.47 in the June and September quarters of 2008:

<http://www.oesr.qld.gov.au/publications/tables/economic-performance/petrol-avg-retail-price-type-bris/index.shtml>.

¹¹ Many books and documentaries have now been published on this topic: for a selection see

<http://www.grinningplanet.com/environmental-books/peak-oil-books.htm>, and

<http://www.grinningplanet.com/6001/environmental-movies.htm#peakoil>.

¹² Bruce Robinson, Convenor of the Australian Association for the Study of Peak Oil and Gas, has for some time been advocating the adoption of plans for national petrol rationing in what he sees as the likely event of a 'petrol drought': <http://www.aspo-australia.org.au/general/peak-oil-the-elephant-at-the-summit.html>.

¹³ Holt-Gimenez, E., and Patel, R., 2008, **Food Rebellions! Crisis and the Hunger for Justice**, Pambazuka Press, Cape Town, 11.

¹⁴ ACF (2008, pvii)

¹⁵ This estimate comes from the Population Division of the Economic and Social Affairs Department of the United Nations: <http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp2008/index.htm>.

¹⁶ <http://www.worldhunger.org/articles/Learn/world%20hunger%20facts%202002.htm>;
<http://www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/publications/facts/obesity/en/>

¹⁷ Miguel Altieri, Professor of Agroecology at the Department of Environmental Science, Policy and Management, University of California, Berkeley, and the holder of numerous international directorships and visiting professorships, is one of the world's leading experts on the environmental health risks of the widespread introduction of genetically-modified crops. He has also researched and published extensively on the effective development of agro-ecological farming systems for small peasant and indigenous farmers, in particular ecologically-based pest management. His CV, which contains a list of his books and publications since 1995, is available here:http://www.redcapa.org.br/curriculo_prof/miguel_altieri.pdf.

¹⁸ In the US, where 64 million hectares of land has been planted with GM crops, recent reports have revealed that at least 10 species of 'superweed' have evolved to be resistant to Monsanto's Round-Up herbicide: Nestle, M., 2010, **Round-Up Red Alert: US Farmers Grow Superweeds**, The Atlantic,
<http://www.theatlantic.com/food/archive/2010/05/roundup-red-alert-us-farms-grow-superweeds/56250/>.

¹⁹ See **The National Preventative Health Strategy 2009** and the accompanying Technical Report **Obesity in Australia: a need for urgent action**, prepared by the *National Preventative Health Task Force*,
<http://www.preventativehealth.org.au/internet/preventativehealth/publishing.nsf/Content/national-preventative-health-strategy-1lp>.

²⁰ ACF (2008, p.ix)

²¹ National Preventative Health TaskForce, **Technical Paper 1: Obesity in Australia: a need for urgent action**.

²² See DAFF, 2005, **Submission to the Tax Board**,
http://www.taxboard.gov.au/content/small_business_CGT/submissions/P10_DAFF.pdf.

²³ NSW Department of Planning (2009)

²⁴ As discussed for example in the *Transition Handbook: From Oil Dependency to Local Resilience* (Rob Hopkins, <http://transitionculture.org/shop/the-transition-handbook/>); see also the "Peak Oil Blues" blog of Kathy McMahon, <http://www.peakoilblues.org/blog/>.

²⁵ Adapted from Royal Institute of International Affairs (2009, p.26)

²⁶ **Coffs Harbour Economic Update** Edition 8, March 2010,
http://www.coffsharbour.nsw.gov.au/resources/documents/Coffs_Economic_Update_Edtn_8_March_2010.pdf.

²⁷ **Coffs Harbour Economic Profile 2007**, CHCC Economic Development Unit, p14,
http://www.coffsharbour.nsw.gov.au/resources/documents/Coffs_Harbour_Economic_Profile_2007_Lo_ReS.pdf.

²⁸ This figure comes from **Sustainable Growing Systems for the Nambucca Shire**, published by the Nambucca Valley Conservation Association in 2009 (authors Kelly A Tudhops and Alastair Gunn).