

NATIONAL FOOD PLAN 2011 SUBMISSION PAPER

1. What is the most important thing a national food plan should try to achieve?

To guarantee that every Australian has access to safe, affordable, fresh locally grown food that not only tastes good, but is also good for you, that is grown in an environmentally and socially beneficial manner, to both those that grow the natural food and those that consume that food. Whilst ensuring that the food grower or farmer is fairly remunerated by his/her efforts in producing the quality product, but also that the consumer pays a fair price for the quality food they choose to buy.

With these objectives, there may be enough incentive to encourage young farmers to continue or return to arable land to produce good, clean and fair food for all Australians.

2. What do you think the vision and objectives for a national food plan should be?

Vision is that the National Food Plan will improve the health and nutrition of all Australians, through provision of practical access for all people to affordable, natural, safe, fresh and locally grown food.

Objectives are as follows:

1. Suitable and sufficient arable land that is also close to cities and within urban areas is secured for food production taking into account future affects of climate change and increase in population.
2. Water is secured for sustainable food production and owned publicly.
3. Seasonally grown food that is both suitable to the soil types and the climatic environments of each region within Australia.
4. Consumers are educated as to what is and have access to fresh seasonally locally grown food to specific regions of Australia.
5. Manufactured or processed food to be clearly labelled, with origin of the raw product and distances travelled, and the environmental costs of transforming foods thus full traceability from paddock to plate.
6. Regulations to be developed, to raise awareness of the consumer in relation to the detrimental affects of processed fast foods on their health and the effects on the resources of the planet.
7. Health campaigns to continue educating the population of the benefits of natural and seasonal locally grown foods.
8. Information provided to the all the Australian public, on the connection and impacts of inappropriate daily food choices on the human health and wellbeing and the cost these food choices have on the health system and the economy. With government policy to reflect and address these issues.

3. What do you see as the major risks to Australia's food supply in the coming years and decades? How could they be avoided or managed more effectively?

Risks

- Availability of suitable arable farming land that is not only close to but in urban areas where the water resources that are required are available for sufficient and diverse naturally locally grown safe and seasonal food supplies.
- Lack of farmers to produce quality seasonally fresh and locally grown food, as farmers are not remunerated sufficiently for the quality, labour or time to produce fresh quality foods.
- Destruction or reallocation of arable rural land for the increased demand for mining resources and urbanisation.
- Demand from overseas countries for food grown and produced in Australia would reduce the affordability and availability of locally produced food for Australians.
- Foreign interests controlling our sovereign lands for the benefit of their own population can lead to the lack of biodiversity and loss of foods suitable and available to an Australian population.
- Climate change impacts not being addressed in a manner for a sustainable food production future eg methane gas produced by cows in Australia – new innovative ways to convert methane gas into re-useable solid and liquid energy.
- With the current distribution chains and production methods of broad acre and large-scale food production and with the long distances of food transportation from paddock to plate, there is the high risk of increased food prices, linked to reduction in available petroleum on the world market.
- Too much emphasis is placed upon the export market and thus economics – thus demand leads supply, which emphasises the economic model of food production, but does not address the environmental and social aspects of food production in Australia. As we have recently seen, Australia does not control external factors, thus more emphasis needs to be placed on domestic consumption and value of the sustainable farmer – not necessarily the traditional farmer.

Avoidable and managed effectively

- Develop a national geographical plan of land that is arable food producing land, with suitable and sufficient water resources, and match the land with appropriate and diverse foods, that will not only take into consideration climate change but also the needs of population growth.
- Reserving appropriate fertile lands for farming sustainable food production only, and not to be purchased by foreign governments, companies or nationals of other countries or allocated for urbanisation.
- Farmers that produce good tasty quality seasonal, locally grown food that is sustainable, to receive fair remuneration for the food that they produce.
- Farming and Farmers to be valued as a “National Treasured Essential Asset” and young people be encouraged to consider it as a profession.
- Education of farmers so that sustainable land management is undertaken.
- Empowering communities to take responsibilities for growing and producing food by making land available for this purpose.
- Increase education and funding for community, urban and school gardens within urban area.
- National nutrition guidelines being based on whole foods rather than nutritional chemical compositions.

- Assist to make direct sales between farmers and consumer easier and more cost effective for both farmers and consumers – eg farmers markets, CSA's
- Australians have easy access to fresh quality foods at an affordable price.
- Start to raise awareness to the Australian public of the issue of food wastage, being a major consumer issue for food production and ways that food wastage can be reduced through good healthy and safe food practices.

4. **What does food security mean to you? How would this be achieved? How would we know if/when we are food secure?**

Food security means that the entire Australian population has the right to access good, clean, sufficient and safe naturally grown food for their daily consumption, at a price that all can afford, whilst sustaining the farmer to continue farming.

This can be achieved through governments taking responsibility to do long term planning with sustainable farming and food distribution system, taking into consideration the health and wellbeing of the people, thus environmental and social aspects, rather than only an economic model of growth and prosperity through resources.

We would know Australia is food secure when all Australians have access to affordable good, clean and fair food that is safe to eat and that there is an increasing trend in the number of sustainable farmers producing this food for Australians.

5. **What are the most important benefits that Australian consumers get or should get from our food supply? Why?**

- The information that the consumer needs to be able to make an educated and healthy choice for what they decide to eat for themselves and feed their families eg adequate labelling
- The diversity of choice for where all Australians can afford to buy these foods.
- That the food is fresh and nutritious and has beneficial health consequences.
- That the food is grown naturally and free from chemical contamination.
- That the food has been produced sustainably and is not a drain on the community, ecosystem or the economy.
- That the final product is treated with respect and humanity.
- That the food we eat is sensibly regulated and standards are applied so that consumers are protected by food borne diseases.
- The consumer gets to pay a fair price for the locally seasonal safe food and that the farmer directly benefits from the consumer knowing this product and receives a fair price.

6. **What are two or three actions? By the government sector that would most benefit food consumers?**

- Governments need to commence food and taste education as part of the national school curriculum from the time children are in primary school until they leave school. Emphasis must also be made at tertiary level for food related courses to have a link between food and nutrition and health.
- Governments introduce proper labelling laws that provide consumers with appropriate information, to make good food choices based on a clear understanding of the foods they choose to consume – from paddock to plate.
- Governments can assist with incentives, making it easier for small scale farmers to provide fresh healthy safe, local produce to be able to sell directly to the consumer, thus providing open and free competition that does not only benefit the duopoly of the 2 SUPER markets.

By the non-government sectors that would most benefit food consumers?

- The food industry – processes and manufacturers of food and chefs/restaurants, grocery stores, supermarkets – can start to identify where the food they purchase comes from (State, region and farmer) through labelling and acknowledging the farmer and the region in which the produce is grown – thus linking the farmer with the consumer.
- The food industry to differentiate and educate the difference between quality foods that are good, clean and fair (or take into consideration, the farmer, the society and the environment) and foods that are produced in quantity and thus price differentiate between the two.
- The food industry to bring into balance the effects of their businesses economically, but also taking into consideration the social and environment aspects, including the food miles they create and indicating these on processed/manufactured foods.

7. What do you see as the major opportunities for Australia's Food Industry in the coming years and Decades? How could they be realised?

- Maintaining and delivering on the 100% Clean Green image for all our foods grown and produced/manufactured in Australia.
- To produce “quality” not “quantity” and be sustainable not only from an economic perspective, but also considering social and environmental aspects.
- To encourage small scale farmers and producers to form co-operatives thus maintain diversity and increasing the potential to increase the financial benefits to farmers farming sustainably in the future.
- To decentralise processing operations to regional areas close to production areas, to not only value add and diversify product output but also to sustain the rural communities.
- To use innovation to reduce the amount of non recyclable waste products used in animal and crop production and abattoirs and food packaging.
- reduce the amount of food wastage of per capita – eg restaurants, supermarkets, food shops and households etc
- To increase natural non fossil energy used for the production of foods

- To increase diversity into the products offered through sustainable resource management, thus increasing biodiversity.

8. What are two or three actions?

By the government sector would most benefit business that make, distribute and sell food?

- Governments to provide incentives for businesses that reduce the environmental footprint, by reducing the food miles for each product they grow, process or manufacture – from paddock to plate - with each product identifying those food miles.
- Governments to assist businesses that wish to make available good and clean and safe food easily available to disadvantaged Australians so that their health and wellbeing is not compromised.
- Governments assist with incentives for farmers that wish to produce good, clean and fair foods, that benefit the society and the environment, as well an economically.

By the non-government sectors would benefit businesses that make, distribute and sell food?

- To reduce the food miles their products are travelling to get to the consumer.
- Consider the social responsibility that they have to their customers by becoming partners with producers, and advocating the local production and the actual farmer, for mutual benefits.

9. What specific food policy and regulatory functions within or between governments, overlap, are at cross purposes, have gaps?

The only comment I can make here is that the governments must ban all GM products as they are not necessary for the Australian agricultural industries or for the Australian public or for the future increase in population.

All food to be labelled adequately taking into consideration – food miles, acknowledging state, regions and farmers, GMO Free,

Q10, Q11, Q12, Q13, Q14 and Q15

Not answered due to lack of information for reasonable comment.

16. What specific actions would help improve food security in remote Indigenous and low socioeconomic populations?

- Unilateral education of the various indigenous food cultures, identifying the significance and importance of native foods available in all areas of Australia, including traditional medicinal plants.
- Identifying and educating of the health issues that the Indigenous people have by adopting a western diet, including increasing processed sugar and fats intake.
- Introduce native food gardens and reintroduce indigenous cultural education to low socio-economic populations that live in urban areas.

- Elders from their own communities to raise awareness and take the responsibility to achieve set outcomes for the health and wellbeing of their community.
17. Do you see a role for the food industry in supporting population health and nutrition outcomes? If so, what do you believe that role is and what support might industry need in fulfilling this role?
- The food industry has a responsibility to inform consumer of production methods, from paddock to plate, and thus must rebirth itself as a provider of good health rather than a provider of convenience, fast, and addictive foods that are leading to major health issues amongst the Australia population that is increasingly draining the government's revenue.
 - Industry will need to look at food in a holistic manner from acknowledging farmers that grow the safe, good clean and fair food and label accordingly to inform consumers of the benefits of these efforts by farmers, with food labels that demonstrate these social, environmental values, to gain consumer confidence that they will deliver.

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