

## Food System Briefing – April 2021

### The Challenge

Food is a basic human need and right for everyday life however too many whānau across Te Awa Kairangi are experiencing the impacts of a food system that is not meeting this fundamental need.

The COVID-19 Level 4 lockdown highlighted an immediate and alarming degree of food insecurity (being unable to access enough good food every day) in our city and the demand for emergency food was overwhelming<sup>1</sup>. These issues were already present pre COVID-19 but the pandemic exacerbated existing inequities.

Our current food system does not provide everyone in our communities with access to good food – food that is nutritionally adequate, culturally and socially appropriate and affordable.

Collective efforts to build equitable, resilient and sustainable food systems<sup>2,3</sup> (refer to Figure 2 Four Dimensions of Sustainable Diets) globally, nationally and locally has been well recognised as an urgent priority<sup>4</sup>. The World Economic Forum states that ‘finding solutions to provide nutritious food to nearly 10 billion people by 2050 without destroying our planet is one of the greatest leadership opportunities of our generation’<sup>5</sup>.

Food insecurity significantly impacts the health and wellbeing of our people by contributing to rates of preventable chronic disease including rates of obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, several forms of cancer, osteoporosis, poor oral health and mental health<sup>6</sup>. The Household Food Insecurity Among Children Report<sup>7</sup> states that almost 1 in 5 New Zealand children live in poverty and don’t have access to affordable, nutritious and safe food each day. Food insecurity also impacts the social and economic development of our communities. The estimated cost of the diabetes ‘pandemic’ alone is expected to cost New Zealand up to \$3.5 billion by 2040<sup>8</sup>.

A population that is healthy and thriving is more able and more likely to fully participate in society including being in employment and contributing to a vibrant and productive local community.

### The food system

The concept of individual choice is challenging for people navigating a complex food system<sup>9</sup> (refer to Figure 2 Food System Map). Local [community insights](#) in Te Awa Kairangi reveal underlying barriers such as low paying jobs, busy lifestyles/time poor and high living costs making it harder for whānau to access good food.

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<sup>1</sup> Hutt City Council and Healthy Families Hutt Valley, 2021. From food parcels to food resilience. <https://www.healthyfamilieshuttvalley.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/From-food-parcels-to-food-resilience.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Food and Planet. Four Dimensions of Sustainable Diets. <https://ana.org.nz/event/towards-sustainable-diets/>

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, 2020. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2020/09/united-nations-releases-special-2020-broadcast-calling-for-collective-action/>

<sup>4</sup> Global Nutrition Report, 2020. <https://globalnutritionreport.org/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/01/four-priorities-to-help-fix-the-global-food-system>

<sup>6</sup> Healthy Families Hutt Valley, 2021. The health of our people in Te Awa Kairangi. <https://www.healthyfamilieshuttvalley.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/The-Health-of-Our-People-in-Te-Awa-Kairangi-April-2021.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Health, 2019. Household food insecurity among children: New Zealand Health Survey. <https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/publications/household-food-insecurity-among-children-new-zealand-health-survey-jun19.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> PWC, 2021. The Economic and Social Cost of Type 2 Diabetes.

<sup>9</sup> Child Poverty Action Group, 2020. Aotearoa, land of the long wide bare cupboard. Food Insecurity in New Zealand Part 1: Fat, famished or starved in a land of plenty? <https://www.cpag.org.nz/assets/191107%20CPAG%20Food%20Poverty%20Part%201%20FINAL%20WEB.pdf>

Although it is desirable, most people cannot grow, hunt or gather their own food and many do not have the knowledge and mātauranga about food to be able to access good food themselves.

Our food retail environment in Te Awa Kairangi means some of our communities can be considered food swamps, where the density of foods high in fat, sugar and salt with minimal nutritional value, outweigh access to nutritious food. In these areas, accessing good food requires people to travel bringing an additional economic and time cost for already stretched whānau.

Community organisations and initiatives such as foodbanks, food rescue and Pātaka Kai work hard to address immediate need. Other local networks, urban farms, community gardens and maara kai have developed over time to supply good food to communities, and these often rely heavily on volunteers and sufficient funding. It's been widely recognised by community organisations that we need to build a food system that moves away from food dependency towards food resilience.

Historically, Te Awa Kairangi has been fertile growing land that fed most of the Wellington region. We now rely on imports and nationwide food distribution. New Zealand imports enough food to feed 10 million people and exports enough food to feed 20 million people<sup>10</sup>. Supply chains have been affected globally by the COVID-19 pandemic and food is one of the largest drivers of environmental change contributing to climate change, biodiversity loss and freshwater use<sup>11</sup>.

### **The role of Local Government**

The Local Government Amendment Act 2019 reinstated the four wellbeings – social, economic, environmental and cultural to the work of Councils. The Health Act 1956 states that local government has a duty to 'improve, promote and protect public health within its district'.

These legislative remits recognise the work councils do to deliver wellbeing outcomes for their communities. It also explicitly acknowledges the broader role councils have in fostering liveable communities, rather than simply being providers of core services. Hutt City Council also has a role to ensure our food system is resilient to the impacts of climate change and urban development.

Hutt City Council's vision is a city where everyone thrives. Council has the opportunity and access to unique levers to show leadership in the movement of creating an equitable, resilient and sustainable food system. Strengthening the local food system will contribute to improving the wellbeing and livelihoods of all those it serves as well as protect our natural environment.

### **What have we done previously?**

We've made a start to build our understanding about our local food environment in order to address food insecurity. We acknowledge that there is more to do however here is a snapshot of early progress (refer to Appendix 1 for more detail).

- Proactively made our Council facilities more health promoting by removing vending machines and improving food offerings in our vending machines to meet nutritional guidelines.
- Increased the number of water fountains we have across our city from five in 2015 to over 25 in 2020.

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<sup>10</sup> Food Insecurity in New Zealand Part 1: Fat, famished or starved in a land of plenty? 2020

<sup>11</sup> Good Food Cities: Achieving a Planetary Health Diet for All. C40Cities.

- Supported the Player of the Day initiative that removes fast food vouchers out of junior sport by replacing with free pool passes that has an annual reach of 20,000 juniors from across the Wellington and Horowhenua-Kāpiti regions.
- Evaluated our emergency food provision during COVID-19 that resulted in the From Food Parcels to Food Resilience report.
- Provided community funding to a number of organisations in the food system.
- Hosted a discussion and sharing of local insights in 2020 with the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (Child Poverty Unit), Ministry of Social Development (Food Secure Communities), Ministry of Education (Ka Ora, Ka Ako Healthy School Lunches Programme), Kore Hiakai and local community champions including Common Unity Project Aotearoa and Taitā Pomare Community Trust.

**What is currently happening?**

Below provides examples of some of the work happening locally, regionally and nationally to address food insecurity.

Locally:

- Commitment to creating a resilient and sustainable food system has been outlined in the [Hutt City Council COVID-19 Recovery Plan](#) and recognises the significant value in high trust relationships between organisations during the lockdown period. These resulted in food reaching those who urgently needed it. Work is underway to achieve the action identified, and it is a priority for the Neighbourhoods and Communities group as part of the proposed 10-year Plan 2021-31.
- Hutt City Council has included the intention to consider ways to reduce the amount of waste going to the landfill by diverting food waste in the proposed 10-year Plan 2021-31.
- Hutt City Council has supported and investment in a number of food related initiatives:

Group	Amount	Notes
Common Unity Project Aotearoa	\$42,000	2020/21 - Kakano Fund (seed funding) towards the establishment of Hutt Valley Food Resilience Network.
Taita Pomare Community Trust	\$50,000	Rental space for Taita foodbank and coordinator to be located in Taita shops.
Kaibosh	\$25,000	New storage facility for kai receiving and distribution depot.
Takiri Mai te Ata	\$32,000	To create a food hub in Wainuiomata where the community can learn and share new concepts related to food.

- A convening group has been established to develop a Hutt Valley Food Resilience Network. The foundation partners are Regional Public Health, Community Unity Project Aotearoa, Kōkiri Marae Health and Social Services, Upper Hutt City Council and Hutt City Council.

- Takiri Mai te Ata Whānau Ora Collective have developed Kōkiri Marae Pātaka Kai and Maara Kai in Wainuiomata. Between March and August 2020, over 30,000 whānau received food packages from the pātaka. This initiative fosters community connectedness through learning opportunities in the maara and the generosity of the pātaka.
- Common Unity Project Aotearoa (CUPA) continues to work collaboratively with community, schools and organisations across Lower Hutt to create a resilient food system. CUPA's projects feed people every day and are an opportunity for community to learn, be involved and take care of each other. Since 2018, CUPA has produced over 15 tonne of produce in the Hutt Valley. In the last year alone, 40,000 meals have been delivered out of their off-grid kitchen, making CUPA one of the largest community-led projects in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Regionally:

- Regional Public Health and Common Unity Project Aotearoa have been facilitating a regional approach over the past eight months through Kai and Our Community hui with the goal of creating a Regional Food Network.
- One of the key initiatives in the draft Wellington Regional Growth Framework is to 'Develop a regional strategy for food production to ensure food security and efficient supply chains and to include an emphasis on employment opportunities.'

Nationally:

- Kore Hiakai Zero Hunger Collective are working towards an Aotearoa where everyone has dignified access to enough good food.
- The Ministry of Social Development are investing \$32 million over two years to support communities to become food secure while addressing additional demand on foodbanks, food rescue and other community food services.
- The Aotearoa Circle, a partnership of public and private sector leaders, is committed to preserving New Zealand's natural resources and is working on the National Food Strategy Project.
- In March 2021, WasteMINZ led a National Food Waste Summit to continue the conversation about reducing carbon emissions from food waste.

### **Levers and opportunities for greater action and impact**

Local government has the unique ability to address the underlying complexity in the food system. This will amplify current action to collectively create an equitable, resilient and sustainable local food environment.

Council can:

- Support **local food initiatives that apply the concepts of a circular economy** in line with the COVID-19 Recovery Plan (for example support local food initiatives to become registered providers to the Government's Ka Ora, Ka Ako Healthy School Lunches Programme).
- **Support local initiatives that provide culture based solutions** to achieve an equitable, resilient and sustainable food system.

- **Extend high trust relationships** to allow organisations and community groups to easily access resources that will enable their work in the food system to be more sustainable.
- **Protect highly productive land through the District Plan.** The National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land places importance on protecting this land.
- Ensure the District Plan **enables communities to have ease of access to nutritionally and culturally appropriate foods.**
- **Enable the creation of local solutions to address food waste.** Composting food waste locally will improve employment opportunities and contribute to circular economy principles. Compost can also be a source of revenue.
- **Consider the food environment during planning and new developments.** Identify opportunities to partner with local businesses or community groups working in the food system to create local employment and improve resilience through development opportunities. Include options for growing spaces in landscape designs.
- **Make it easier for people to travel to good food sources** by comprehensively planning for a transport system that works for people, advocating for an affordable public transport system, and considering good food sources within a short walk or bike ride from people's homes.
- Proactively support the development of a regional food production strategy **as proposed in the Draft Wellington Regional Growth Framework.**
- **Include the food system in sustainability and resilience outcomes during planning.** Creating a resilient and sustainable food system will contribute to reducing the impact of climate change in our community.

### **Creating a resilient food system together**

Local government has unique levers and a legislated mandate to play a key role in making meaningful change in our food system. Council's leadership can grow the collective effort to make our food environment one that supports healthy, happy and connected communities. Together alongside our partners and communities we can improve the health and wellbeing of all of our people living in Te Awa Kairangi, nurture social connectedness, protect our natural environment and ultimately create a city where everyone thrives.

### **Further information**

[Kai Experiences in Te Awa Kairangi](#)

[From Food Parcels to Food Resilience](#)

[Tākiri Mai Te Ata Whānau Ora Collective Kokiri Hauora response for the community during and following the COVID-19 Lockdown 2020](#)

[The health of our people in Te Awa Kairangi](#)

[Interactive Map of the Food Environment](#)

[Kore Hiakai Zero Hunger Collective, Kore Hiakai: Find a Community Food Organisation](#)

[MSD Food Secure Communities](#)

[United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#)

Figure 1: Four Dimensions of Sustainable Diets

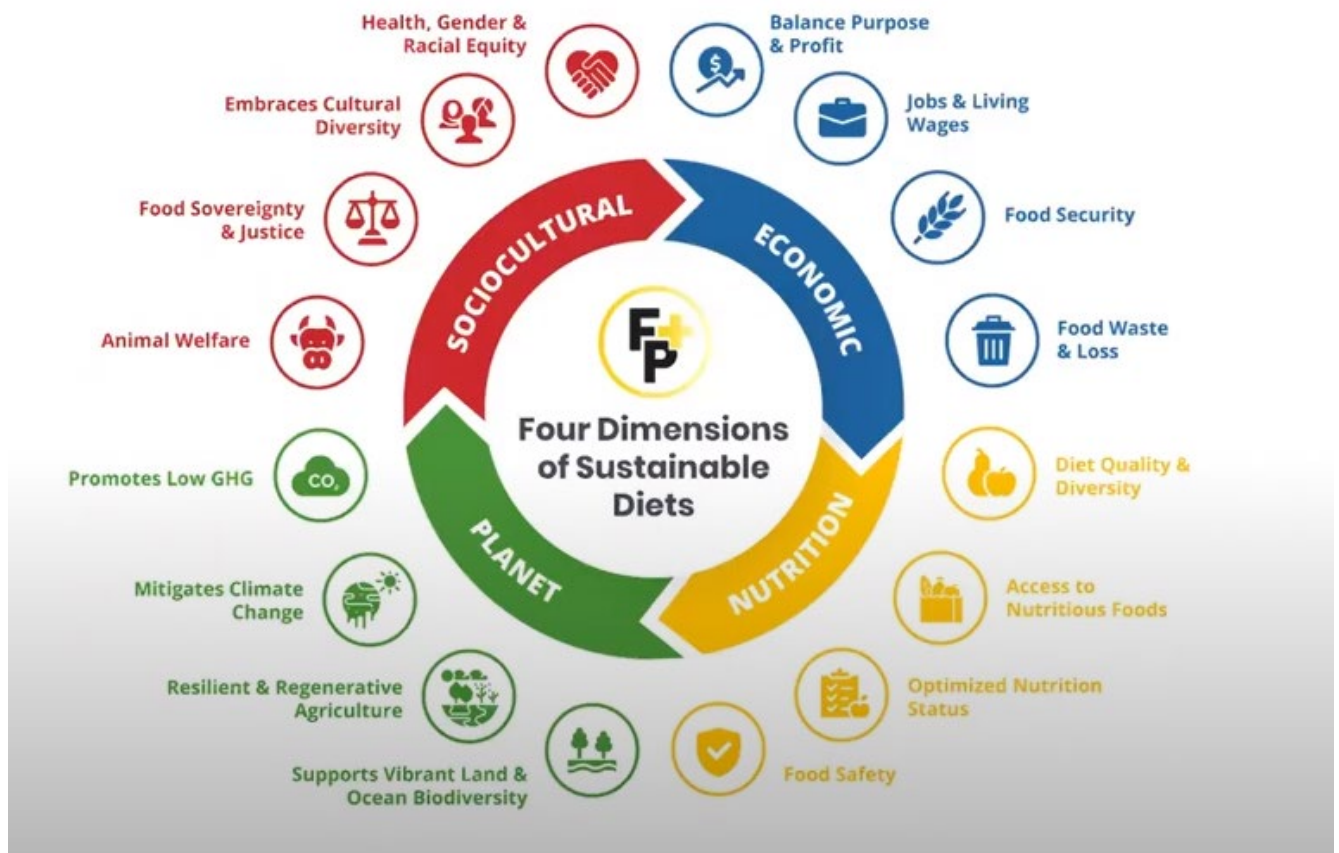
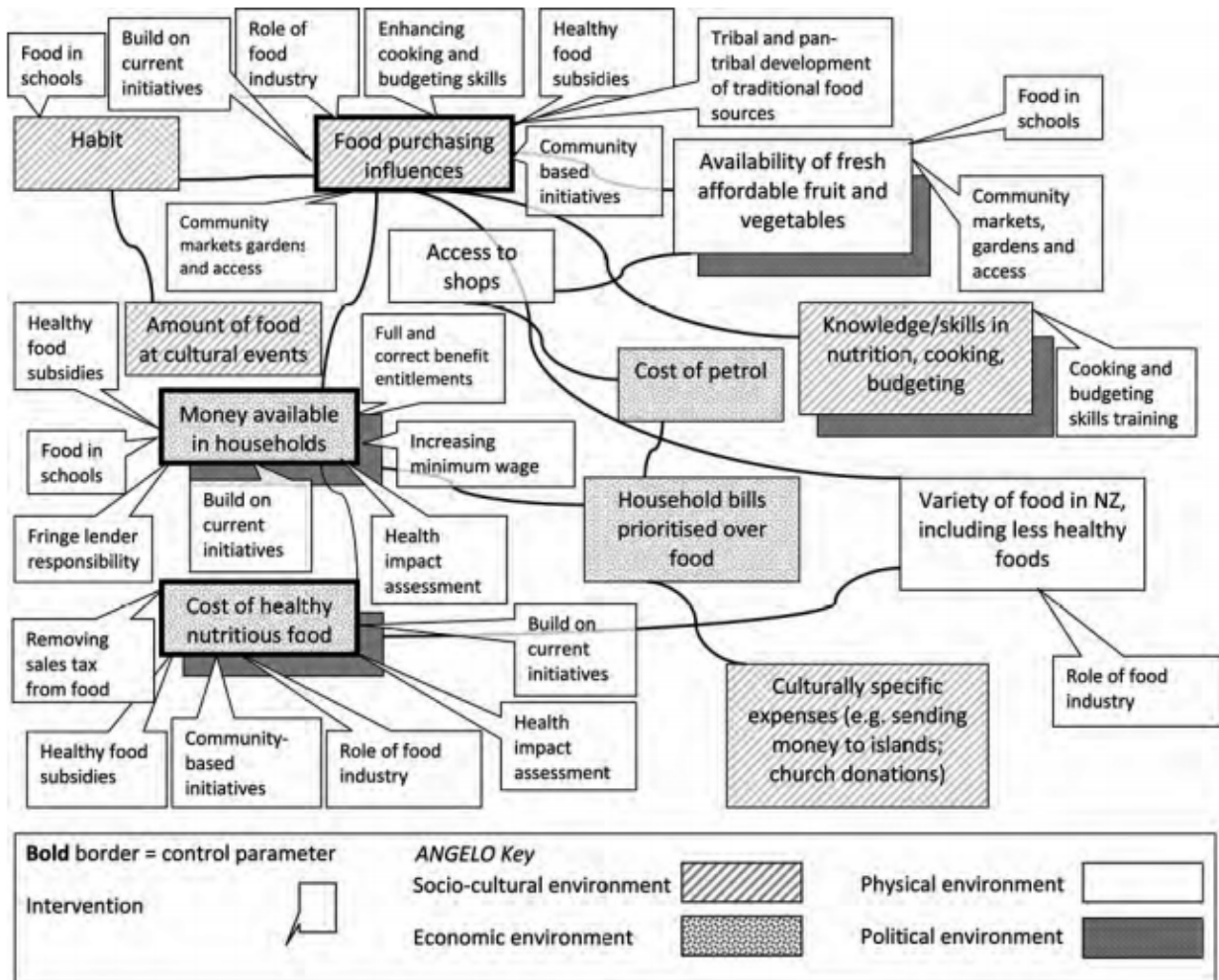


Figure 2: Food System Map



## Appendix 1

- Supported community gardens and planting of fruit trees.
- Adopted Healthier Catering Guidelines for Hutt City Council in 2018.
- Supported the establishment and ongoing running of the Naenae Village Market.
- Supported the Hutt Real Food Challenge in 2017.
- Hosted the Gangsta Gardener in partnership with Wellington Visa on a Plate in 2018.
- Held a Hutt City Council workshop in 2018 on 'Transforming our food and beverage environment'.
- Undertaken a citizens panel survey in 2016 and a literature review in 2018-19 to inform our role in the food system.
- Mapped the food retail environment in 2015 and 2019.
- Held a joint Hutt City Council and Upper Hutt City Council workshop on the 'Health and Wellbeing of our People in Te Awa Kairangi' in 2019 which included addressing our food environment.
- Incorporated Healthy Food Vendor assessment criteria for concession licenses for Hutt City Council parks and sports grounds.
- Gathered community and stakeholder voice in Wainuiomata, Taitā, Pomare and through The Voice of the Community in Naenae throughout 2019-2020.
- Supported the delivery of food during COVID-19 through co-ordination, people resource and fleet vehicles.