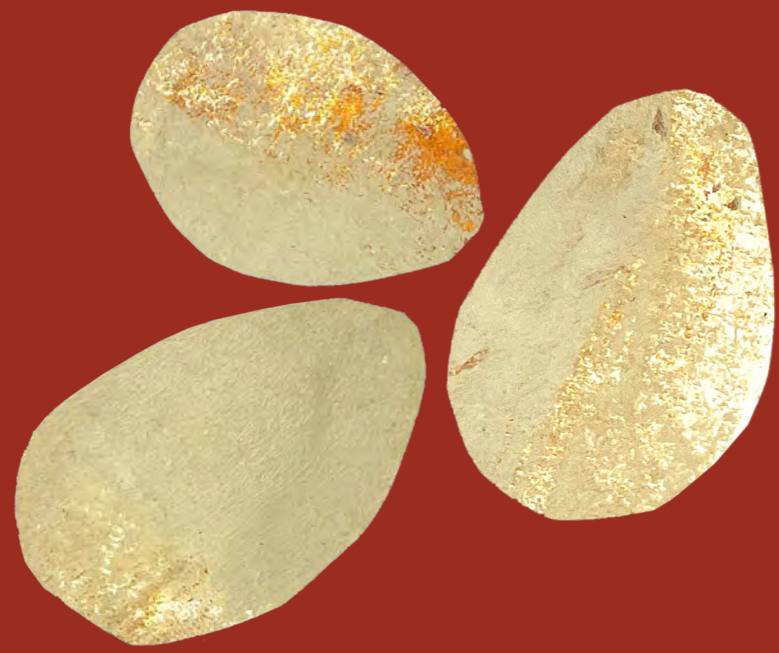
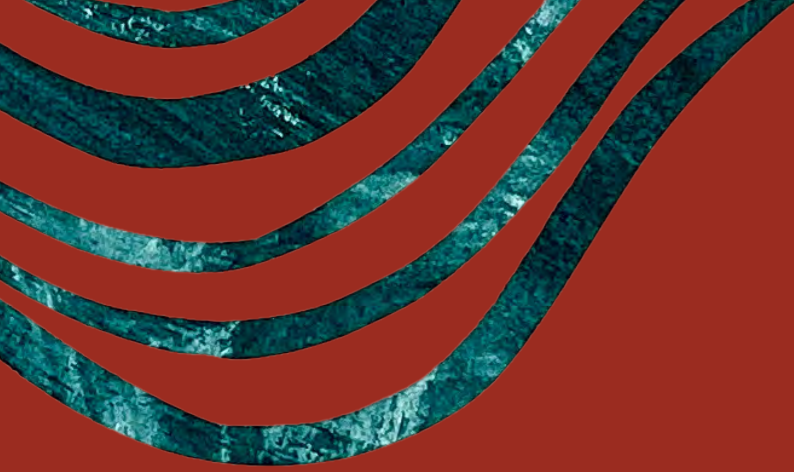




Central Goldfields

**FOOD
NETWORK**

**ISSUES AND
OPPORTUNITIES
PAPER 2024**



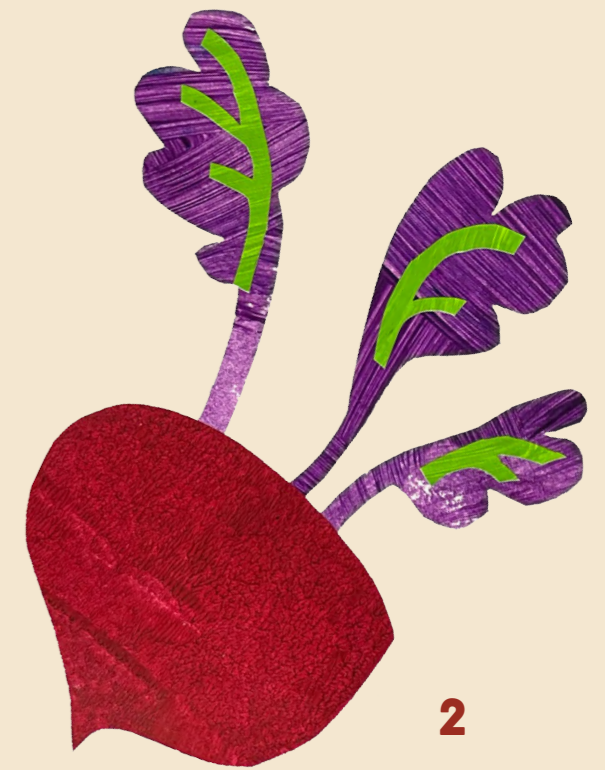
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Central Goldfields Food Network acknowledges the Dja Dja Wurrung peoples as the Traditional Owners of the lands and waterways on which we live, collaborate, and grow, and we pay our respects to their elders, both past and present. We recognise the insight and wisdom shared in DJAARA's Dhelkunya Dja (Healing Country) Plan and the way that it will inform sustainable food systems now, and in the future.

We give thanks to the local community for making authentic contributions and co-authoring this paper with their insights and ideas. We thank Dr Kylie Fisk, of Sustain: The Australian Food Network for her expert guidance in ensuring the relevance of this Paper under a Food Systems lens.

We acknowledge and thank Healthy Loddon Campaspe and the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation for funding the development and production of this Paper.

CONTENTS



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	2
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND	7
CENTRAL GOLDFIELDS FOOD NETWORK	7
DEMOGRAPHICS AND SOCIOECONOMICS	8
STRATEGIC CONTEXT	8
FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP	9
PATHWAY & PRIORITIES	12
FOOD SYSTEMS & FOOD SECURITY	14
ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES	18
ACCESS & EQUITY	19
EDUCATION & MESSAGING	22
ENVIRONMENT, DISTRIBUTION & WASTE	26
RESOURCING	28
INDUSTRY PRESSURES & POWER DYNAMICS	30
DISCUSSION & NEXT STEPS	33
INSPIRATIONAL COMMUNITY INITIATIVES	35



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Food is essential to everyone, and the Central Goldfields region is no exception. The circular journey our food takes- from paddock to plate, and back again- connects people from all walks of life, across industries, ages, and communities.

The pathways, people, and processes involved in feeding our communities are known collectively as the food system. The success of the local food system has a direct impact on our health and wellbeing, the environment, and the local economy.

The Central Goldfields Food Network was formed in late 2022, to invite passionate community members and stakeholders to discuss barriers to healthy food consumption faced by our community. Through a series of workshops and consultations held throughout 2023, members identified a range of issues, and identified some place-based solutions that could make a meaningful difference.

This Issues and Opportunities Paper provides background information on the Central Goldfields Food Network, a brief explanation of what a food system is, and how food insecurity is measured, as well as the Network's commonly identified priorities, next steps, and pathways forward.

It also gives details of the Network's discussions and discoveries, arranging the common themes that have emerged into five broad categories: Access & Equity; Education & Messaging; Environment, Distribution & Waste; Resourcing; and Industry Pressures & Power Dynamics.

Each issue and opportunities category section (pages 18-31) outlays submissions made by network members, as well as ideas for collaboration, innovation and resourcing that emerged during the network hosted workshops in 2023. Finally, the paper includes a summary discussion, and examples of work being done in other communities that might provide inspiration moving forward.

The aim of this paper is to encapsulate community need, elevate and inform local knowledge, and nurture place-based solutions and community action. It is a snapshot of a place and time told through authentic community voices, sharing their stories of hope and concern while working to create positive change together.

We hope that this paper will tell the story of a community that is ready for change, and will act as a resource for growth, education, advocacy, and action. Whether that be as an attachment to a grant application, as subject matter for a school study project or to fuel new strategic direction at leadership levels.

It is important to recognise that this document is by no way comprehensive. Rather, it marks the beginning of a conversation in Central Goldfields about the change that we want, and how we might get there, one season at a time.

Signed,

*The Central Goldfields
Food Network Working Group*





INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

CENTRAL GOLDFIELDS FOOD NETWORK

In August 2022 four stakeholders with an interest in fostering healthy food habits within the Central Goldfields identified a need and opportunity for collaboration.

The strategic alignment of the organisational initiatives of these stakeholders led to a commitment to sharing resources and information for the betterment of the shire's residents. These included the work of the Healthy Kids Advisor initiative in partnership with Vic Kids Eat Well, Healthy Sports Clubs and the VicHealth funded Children and Young People First Project.

The Central Goldfields Food Network was created through the recognition of common priorities around healthy eating trends and behaviours in the shire, and the mutual aim to create positive food habits and to better understand what would be required to ensure sustainable food supply in the region.

A network is effective in this case due to its ability to connect people and offer a platform for exchange of concerns and ideas, as well as the creation of place-based and community led solutions to local issues.

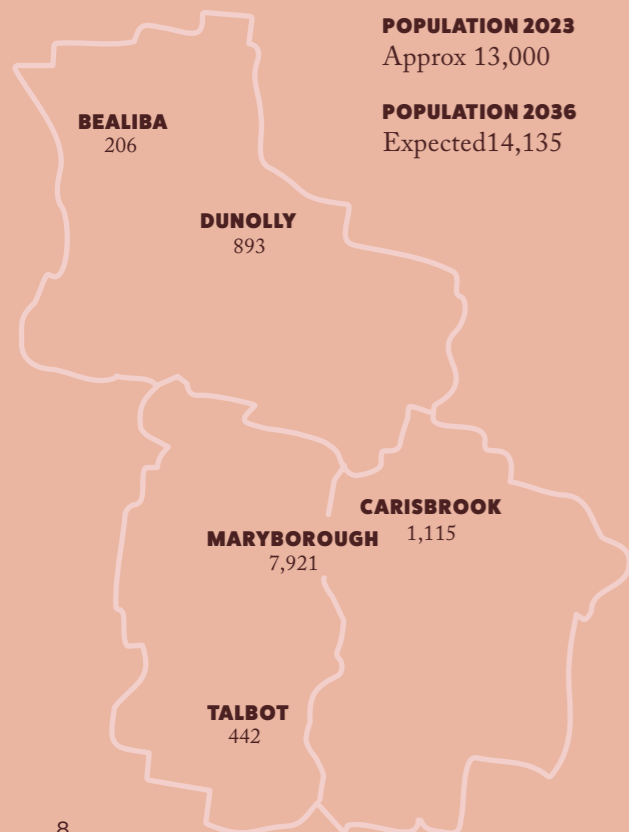
A project working group for the development of the Central Goldfields Food Network was established. The membership of this group included:

- Central Goldfields Healthy Kids Advisor, Ciel Lindley - Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation
- Central Goldfields Health Broker, Adam Tarr - Healthy Loddon Campaspe (HLC)
- Health Promotion Officer, Ned Patterson - Maryborough District Health Service (MDHS)
- Manager Community Partnerships, David Leatham; Sustainability Officer, Julia Walsh; Children and Young People First Project Officer, and Gemma Simpson - Central Goldfields Shire Council (CGSC)



DEMOGRAPHICS & SOCIO-ECONOMICS

Central Goldfields is a small, rural shire in Central Victoria, Australia covering approximately 1,550 square kilometres on Dja Dja Wurrung Country. It is located midway between Ballarat and Bendigo. It has approximately 13,000 residents. Maryborough, population 7,921, is the major business centre. The other main towns are Carisbrook (1,115), Dunolly (893), Talbot (442) and Bealiba (206). There are small, scattered settlements at Adelaide Lead, Betley, Bowenvale/Timor, Daisy Hill, Majorca and Wareek. The population is expected to increase by 1,140 to 14,135 people by 2036 (ABS 2016). 15.5% of the population are under 15 years, 56.3% are aged 15-65 years, and 28.2 % are 65 and over. Future projections indicate that there will be significantly more people over 75 years and over, less people aged 20-24 years and 50 -59 years. The SEIFA Index of Disadvantage notes that Central Goldfields is the most disadvantaged LGA in Victoria, and the Central Goldfields communities experience poorer health outcomes than experienced elsewhere in the state.



STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Council’s vision is for Central Goldfields ‘to be an engaged, flourishing, lively and inclusive community’ (Central Goldfields Shire Council Plan 2021-2025). The Shire is actively connecting to a range of plans aimed at improving health and wellbeing outcomes for residents, and the development of sustainable food systems.

Relevant current plans include:

Central Goldfields Food Systems Strategy Roadmap (currently being developed)

Central Goldfields Climate Action Plan (2022-2030)

Central Goldfields Shire Council Plan (2021-2025)

Central Goldfields Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan (2021-2025)

City of Gastronomy Implementation Framework and Action Plan (2020-2024)

DJAARA’s Dhelkunya Dja (Healing Country) Country Plan (2014-2034)

DJAARA’s Climate Change Strategy and Galk Galk Dhelkunya (Forest Gardening) Strategy (2022-2034)

Healthy Loddon Campaspe – Flourish - Regional Food System Framework (2024)

Maryborough District Health Service - Health Promotion Plan (2021-2025)

Victorian Local Government Partnership (2021-2025)

Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan (2023-2027)

Direct feedback already provided by schools and other stakeholders involved in the Central Goldfields Food Network indicates ongoing concerns for the quality of food and nutrition knowledge, access to fresh produce and healthy diet choices, and access to appropriate facilities to enable healthy dietary choices for young people and children in the shire. This, layered with data from the Australia Bureau of Statistics and other agencies which indicate the shire as a region of pronounced socio-economic concern, lends itself to an intersectional ‘wicked problem’ for the wellbeing of children and young people.

The narrative of ‘disadvantaged’ that has periodically been applied to the Central Goldfields region does not necessarily recognise or reflect the rich connections and capability present in the community, however lack of institutional resourcing places real limits on the capacity for growth and wellbeing. The community and Shire Council are actively working to change this narrative and its root causes, and the Central Goldfields Food Network presents an opportunity to contribute to this change in key aspects of community life, including relationships and access to food, and its life cycle.



FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP

We encourage leaders and decision makers working in any aspect of this landscape to connect with their local Traditional Owners and/or Aboriginal Controlled Organisations, such as the Dja Dja Wurrung Corporation, trading as DJAARA. DJAARA’s Dhelkunya Dja - Healing Country Plan 2014-2034 lays out Djaara’s aspirations for their Country and people.

We thank Mark Costello, Manager Partnerships and Policy and his team at DJARRA and the Bendigo District Aboriginal Cooperative as the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service for the region, for their engagement on this paper.

In recognising Dja Dja Wurrung as Traditional Owners of the land that we collaborate on, we look to their custodial leadership and seek to listen, learn and act in alignment with their vision. We hope that this forges pathways to a greater understanding of our First Nations peoples’ sustainability practices and their ancient innovations when caring for and being connected to Country and we encourage others to do the same.

The following is sourced from the www.DjaDjaWurrung.com.au website and the **Dhelkunya Dja (Healing Country Plan) 2014-2034:**

Our Dhelkunya Dja (Healing Country) Plan reaffirms our goals and obligations to care for Country and describes our People’s aspirations as the Traditional Owners of Djandak.

Dja Dja Wurrung territory extends from Mount Franklin and the towns of Creswick and Daylesford in the southeast to Castlemaine, Maldon and Bendigo in the east, Boort in the north, Donald in the northwest, to Navarre Hill and Mount Avoca marking the south west boundary. Our territory encompasses the Bendigo and Clunes goldfields and the Loddon and Avoca river watersheds. (p8)



The plan defines 5 key areas of strategy and action; *Principals, Culture, Partnerships, Looking After Country, Traditional Knowledge and Economic. Looking after Country:*

1. Our Country is managed in a contemporary context, to generate benefits in circumstances where degradation or destruction can be avoided. Where damage has been done through past activities, a sustained effort will be made to heal our Country.
2. Our use and management of medicinal and edible plants and animals remains a key element of our subsistence and development.
3. The conservation and protection of the environment, in particular where our culturally significant places and sites are located is paramount.
4. We will use both our traditions and the tools and practices available to us as citizens of contemporary Australia to sustainably manage our natural resources.
5. Visitors will be welcome to respect and enjoy our Country.

Traditional knowledge:

1. We will strive to maintain, control, protect and develop our traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions.

Dhelkunya Dja and other DJARRA strategies can be found at: www.djadjawurrung.com.au/resources/

Hundreds of years ago, our Country was mostly covered in open forests and woodlands, providing us with the plants and animals that we used for food, medicine, shelter and customary practices. Today, though our Country is vastly changed, it still holds many important values. (p8)

Dja Dja Wurrung Country is host to some of the most profoundly altered landscapes in Victoria. A long history of agricultural development, urban settlement and mining has left fragmented ecosystems and led to the loss of many species of plants and animals. (p9)

Our Vision for Country is to ensure that: The health and wellbeing of our people is strong, and underpinned by our living culture. Our lands and waters are in good condition and actively managed to protect our values and to promote the laws, culture and rights of all Dja Dja Wurrung People. As this Country's First People we are politically empowered with an established place in society and capable of managing our own affairs from a strong and diverse economic base. (p11)



PATHWAY & PRIORITIES



The Network was launched and conducted its first meeting in November 2022, bringing together approximately 30 interested stakeholders in the community services and development sector to begin mapping the local food system.

Out of this meeting came a desire to bring more voices into the conversation and develop a comprehensive understanding of food related issues and opportunities in our region with an eye to better educating ourselves and to deepen our understanding of the current landscape.

The top 5 priorities that emerged are as follows:

- Continue to meet, share information, support each other, and collaborate.
- Map food access and education related activities in the shire.
- Collectively learn about food systems and how to create a sustainable one.
- Collectively learn about community models that provide solutions to our local issues.
- Use our collective voice for advocacy where needed.

A survey was circulated to participants and other identified stakeholders, capturing further local data on existing food programs, food relief and food retail; challenges and barriers; and visions and priorities. This mapping work was shared back to participants.

Two workshops followed in April and May 2023, with over 30 attendees at each from Central Goldfields, Bendigo and Ballarat regions. These workshops were facilitated by Liminal by Design and provided an opportunity to enrich our findings to date, inspire community action and collaboration, further establish the aims, delivery model and governance of the Network.

The idea for an Issues and Opportunities paper was explored by the working group and the workshops contained intentional segments that enabled the participants the opportunity to co-author the paper by sharing their insights and stories. This anecdotal evidence collected at the meetings and workshops is collated presented in this document.

This paper is the synthesis of findings from the above activities and will be a valuable resource for advocacy, further research, resourcing community action and the development of a Food System Strategy. Agencies and organisations in the food sector are invited and encouraged to use this resource to inform their practice and strategic planning.

At the time of publishing, the Central Goldfields Food Network continues to meet bimonthly in alternating online and in-person sessions. Activities to ensure diverse and relevant representation in the group continue, and we welcome all interested parties to join the Network.

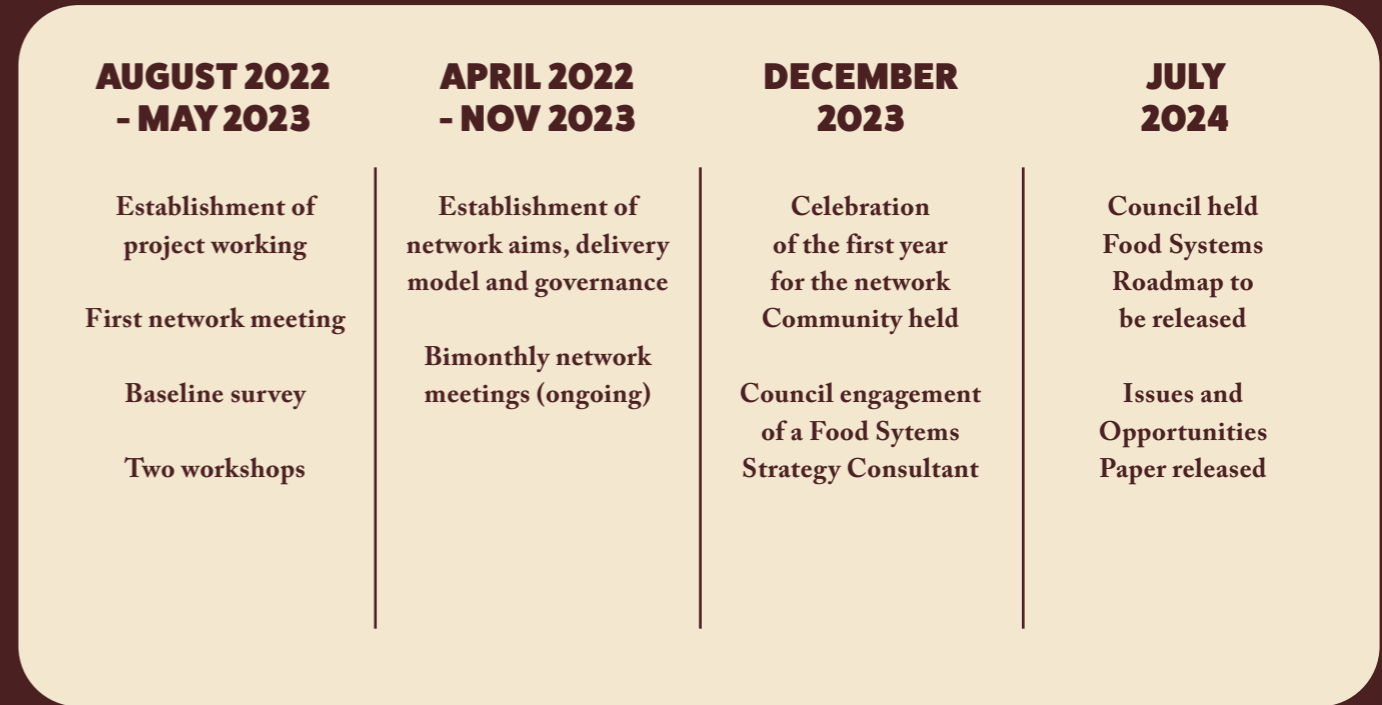


Fig 1. Timeline of key Network activities and related Council activity

THROUGH THE PROCESSES ABOVE, THE CENTRAL GOLDFIELDS FOOD NETWORK HAS GROWN TO INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING MEMBERSHIP:

Anglicare Maryborough, ASTERIA Disability Services, Avoca and Dunolly Community Pantry, Ballarat Local Food Coalition, Bendigo Food Share, Castlemaine Community House, Central Goldfields Aboriginal Engagement Group, Central Goldfields Shire Council (Community Partnerships, Economic Development, Sustainability, Recreation, Maternal Child Health, and Youth Teams), City of Greater Bendigo (Food Systems Officer and Gastronomy Project Officer), Climate Action Stewarding Group, Dunolly Community Garden, Dunolly & District Neighbourhood Centre, Food Bank (Western Victoria), Food is Free (Ballarat), Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal, Grampians Public Health Unit, Grampians Pyrenees Goldfields Food Alliance Network, Healthy Eating Advisory Service (Victorian Government), Healthy Kids Advisors Initiative, Healthy Loddon Campaspe, Maryborough Community Garden, Maryborough Community House, Maryborough District Health Service (Aboriginal Liaison, Health Promotion, Aged Care, and Best Start Teams), Maryborough Neighbourhood House, Maryborough Salvation Army, Mount Alexander Shire Council, The Orange Door, Principals, Teachers and Students from local schools, Sports Focus, Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation, Street Harvest, Sustain: The Australian Food Network, The Mill House, Upper Loddon and Avoca Landcare Network, Victorian Local Government Partnership VLGP Representative), and interested Individual Community Members, and with acknowledgement of Councilor Liesbeth Long, current Mayor of Central Goldfields (at 2024).



FOOD SYSTEMS & FOOD SECURITY

WHAT IS A FOOD SYSTEM?

The food system is everything that happens from farm to fork, from paddock to plate and from soil to stomach so that we can all eat every day. So it's farming, it's food processing and manufacturing, it's transport and logistics, it's retail and marketing, it's consumption - eating and cooking, and it's dealing with waste and recycling. The food system impacts climate change, biodiversity and human health in very major ways. It's everyone's business and we all need to be involved in whatever way we can.

The web of actors, processes and interactions involved in growing, processing, distributing, consuming and disposing of foods, from the provision of inputs and farmer training, to product packaging and manufacturing, to waste recycling. A holistic food systems lens is concerned with how these processes interact with one another, and with the environmental, social, political and economic context. The food systems lens also brings to light reinforcing and balancing feedback loops, tensions between the different components and flows of food systems, and interactions that are cyclical, multilayered and multi-scale. It is a way of thinking about the world that seeks to identify the linear and non-linear relationships between the different components of the system.

International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems 2015 (IPES), p3, 'The new science of sustainable food systems'

WHAT IS FOOD SECURITY?

Food insecurity is an entrenched and worsening social problem, understood according to the internationally-accepted definition from the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO):

“Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.”



UNDERSTANDING THE CENTRAL GOLDFIELDS FOOD SYSTEM

The food security of the Central Goldfields region relies on a sustainable and flourishing food system. The food system encompasses agricultural production to the final consumption of food, involving farming, processing, transportation, retail, consumption, and waste management. This holistic view of the food system also takes into account climate change, biodiversity, and human well-being as factors that both influence and are influenced by the food system.

The Central Goldfields food system consists of a web of actors, processes, and interactions that span from the cultivation of crops and livestock, through processing and distribution, to food consumption and waste disposal. Examining this system through a holistic food systems lens helps reveal the intricate connections between these processes and their interactions with the environmental, social, political, and economic context of the region. This perspective also unveils feedback loops, tensions, and complex, multi-layered interactions within the food system.



UNDERSTANDING FOOD SECURITY IN THE CENTRAL GOLDFIELDS

In considering food security in the Central Goldfields, the globally accepted definition by the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) can be a helpful framework. Food security in this context means ensuring that all residents in the region have continuous physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and preferences for a healthy and active life. This concept encompasses various dimensions:

- 1 Availability:** Ensuring an adequate quantity and quality of food to meet dietary requirements.
- 2 Access (economic, social, and physical):** Providing individuals with the means and opportunities to obtain or access food that meets their dietary needs.
- 3 Utilisation:** Enabling the preparation of safe, nutritionally adequate, and culturally acceptable meals to fulfill dietary needs.
- 4 Stability:** Ensuring food security remains intact during shocks and stresses, such as natural disasters or pandemics.
- 5 Agency:** Granting individuals the autonomy to choose their food and participate in food systems decisions and policies.
- 6 Sustainability:** Promoting food systems that contribute to the long-term regeneration of natural, social, and economic systems, ensuring food security for future generations.

It's important to recognise that addressing these complex and interconnected dimensions requires structural changes to ensure "dignified food security" and uphold the human right to quality food for all who live in the Central Goldfields region.



ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

This next section shares the significant insights that we have collected from our community of workshop participants and Network members (membership and workshops were open to all).

We recognise that the stories, ideas, and concerns presented here could straddle more than one of these themes, however for the purposes of discussion and forward planning we have organised them into the following themes:

Access & Equity

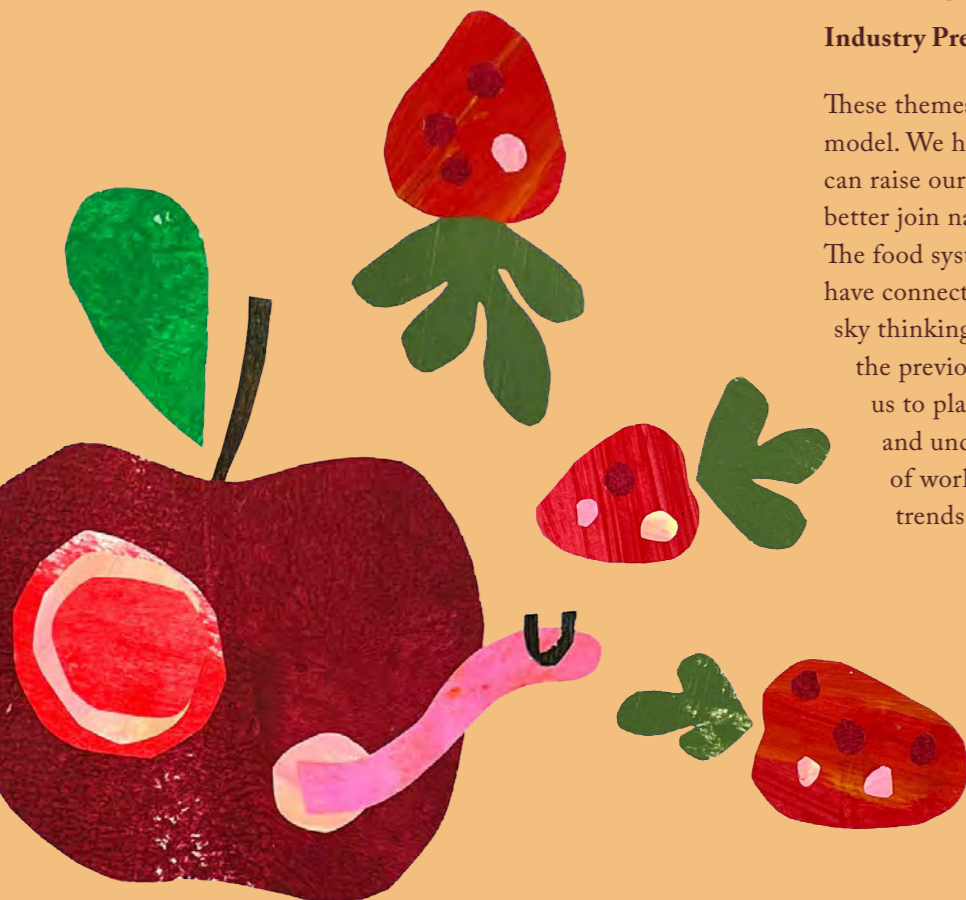
Education & Messaging

Environment, Distribution & Waste

Resourcing

Industry Pressures & Power Dynamics

These themes echo and connect those of a food system model. We have done this intentionally so that we can raise our food system literacy as a community to better join national and international conversations. The food system aspects that we will refer to and have connected the issues, opportunities and blue sky thinking in the following pages are detailed in the previous pages. This alignment will also enable us to plan and act with neighbouring shires and understand the relevance and application of world-wide sustainability innovations and trends to our local landscape.



ACCESS & EQUITY

ISSUES

Transport and Housing – access to storage, kitchens, spaces to grow, prepare & share food.

Access to food is controlled by supermarkets.

Security of and access to local producers.

Rising costs of groceries & food production.

Perceptions that it is easier and cheaper to buy 'junk food'.

OPPORTUNITIES

Map our food access, and 'change-making' food initiatives, organisations and services.

More local food markets.

Additional healthy choice ranges in local cafes and food outlets.

More donation and collection points for free food in the shire.

BLUE SKY THINKING!

Edible garden beds everywhere.

Food as part of the landscape.

Food Hubs – BBQ areas with camp kitchens, veggie gardens and community classrooms.

Remove deep-fryers from community facilities & sports clubs.

Free food in schools and canteen transformations.

ISSUE: FOOD SECURITY

The rising cost of living, food literacy and physical access to nutritious food are all barriers contributing to the increasing food insecurity rates in regional areas across the country. This is heightened in regional and rural areas, and especially in socio-economic status areas such as Central Goldfields.

Parents are going without food to make sure children are fed, food relief stores are regularly running out of stock, people feel that they are unable to afford - or are unaware of how to prepare - nutritious food. The distance people here need to travel to access nutritious food is increasing, as are the associated costs. Most people accessing food relief are doing so for the first time. This increased insecurity results in drops in quality of life and physical condition due to malnutrition, but also has been linked to mental health issues and disengagement from community.

This issue is long term and getting worse. A modern reliance on 'convenience shopping' (e.g. large chain supermarkets) and low prices on mass produced 'fast and packaged food' limits fresh food consumption resulting in ongoing and increasing health issues. The impacts of these issues don't stop there, they are micro and macro; children are attending school without having had brekky, and without packed, nutritious lunch; parents are going without to feed their kids; Hygiene goes downhill - limited funds for extras; greater utility costs drain limited funds; mental health degradation and "Poverty depth" keep growing. I believe that an independent National Report (whole country) is required to shed real light on the massive and wholistic impacts of our local issues of our residents.

Issue shared by: Captain Ronald Stobie (Salvation Army)

Areas of a Food System that this issue connects to:

Distribution, Marketing & Consumption



ISSUE:
**WATER QUALITY,
ACCESS, & SECURITY**

Access to quality, safe water for drinking and for use on veggie gardens is an issue that is growing in severity with increased frequency of droughts, and our changing climate. Local farmers, producers and gardeners are impacted alongside all who consume drinking water across the community. Increased water restrictions result in decreased ability to grow our own food, overall food access and security. The quality and taste of drinking water is also a consideration here, as palatable tap water is important for encouraging healthier hydration habits. Is the Maryborough wastewater and drinking water treatment system expanding or managing to cope with increasing populations?

I believe that there is a lack of council regulations around water storage (tanks) in town boundaries. I wonder if Central Highlands has guidelines around planning requirements and water storage for commercial properties, and if they are within town boundaries, should they be a minimum size?

More information could be sought from Central Highlands and Coliban water authorities regarding their future plans to keep up with increased population and demand for water.

Issue shared by: Workshop participant

Areas of a Food System that this issue connects to:
Environment & Consumption



OPPORTUNITY:
**LOCAL STORAGE TO IMPROVE
ACCESS TO FRESH PRODUCE**

The Maryborough Salvation Army and Dunolly Neighbourhood Centre could only offer some food relief support to a growing need within their community because they lacked storage. The need is growing. 80% of people accessing financial support through the Salvation Army in the past 2 weeks were NEW to the situation!

The Salvation Army currently supports 100 people per week but is projected to grow to 200-300 people per week and Dunolly supports 20 people/week regularly.

The Salvation Army can access enough food through local Coles, Woolies, IGA, bakery, McCains, but can't store it because it has a small fridge or freezer space. And Dunolly can only offer dry food because they have no fridge or freezer and need more volunteers to help.

If the Salvation Army and Dunolly Neighbourhood Centre could gain support to seek funding from places like Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal, Coles, Nurture Fund and Qantas they could purchase storage space for the food that this community needs.

The assets required to make this happen might be; 2 x 20ft fridge/freezer shipping containers to collect and store food, plus a refrigerated van and staff to distribute more food to the people who need it most.

Dunolly Neighbourhood Centre is looking for funding to purchase one or two display fridges to stock refrigerated items such as fresh vegetables and fruit accessed through Bendigo Foodshare. This will allow the Centre to offer a healthier variety of foods to its client base, which has grown to approximately 40 people who are supported weekly. The Centre purchased a second-hand freezer earlier in the year, which has helped enormously.

Workshop idea by: Kath Ryan, Dunolly Neighbourhood Centre & Ronald Stobie, Salvation Army

Areas of a Food System this opportunity connects to:
Consumption & Distribution



OPPORTUNITY:
VERGE VEGGIES

Currently, people walk, ride and drive past empty verges on the way to the supermarket to buy food for themselves and their families. The cost of living is an increasing concern for our residents. By growing free fruit and veg produce on these verges, we could provide our community with access to healthy, low food miles and affordable food! Enthusiastic gardeners across the town could be contacted and, with appropriate authorisations and safeguards, the verges could be planted out to have the streets blooming with foods of all sorts. Specialist foods could also be supplied by local farmers. Suppose Australia ran out of diesel fuel - stopping all the trains and trucks that bring food to Loddon Campaspe. It wouldn't take long for our stores to run out!! Plentiful supply of local produce would also safeguard us from such food security risks, while reducing carbon emissions associated with food transport.

Think of the flow-on benefits that may also be realised, such as reduced cost of living, neighbours getting to know each other, falling crime rates and increased walking and cycling. Local food means healthy locals!

Workshop idea by: Patrick Grace, Community Member

Areas of a Food System this opportunity connects to:
Food Production, Preparation & Consumption



OPPORTUNITY:
**'GROW, COOK, AND CONNECT'
COMMUNITY HUBS**

Build 'Grow, Cook, and Connect' community hubs in green public spaces!

Public BBQ areas are great for gatherings with friends and family, big or small. Imagine if that space also contained a camp kitchen, community garden veggie patches, a herb garden for making teas, more seating, a yarning circle, and a simple (solar powered) indoor space that could be booked and used for community classes, discussions and special events? The infrastructure and maintenance costs would far be outweighed by the benefits in the long run.

By expanding a public offerings like a BBQ area, a town would be offering spaces that can be used to increase food literacy through skill sharing and classes both formal and informal. It would increase social connection and offer dignified food preparation and sharing opportunities for those who may not have a house all to themselves to entertain in. Acting as preventative health assets these suburb based community hubs would also strengthen the livability and visitor interest in the area.

Workshop Idea shared by: Ciel Lindley, HKA - Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation

Areas of a Food System that this issue connects to:
Production, Consumption, Markets & Purchasing, Distribution & Aggregation



EDUCATION & MESSAGING

OPPORTUNITIES

Strong positive and healthy eating messaging around the shire.

Tighter (Council Policy) control over public signage (by businesses and other).

Increase food literacy & holistic food education, and de-centralise out of Maryborough.

Courses & guides on how to use the whole vegetable, reduce waste, preserve, freeze, and ultimately spend less on fresh produce.

Increase knowledge of preserving – food security.

Supermarkets train their staff in food knowledge and cooking skills, encourage conversations with customers.

Cooking and gardening classes in schools.

Local food culture & creativity.

Cooking programs in schools that provide a Pickup & Takeaway Dinner order program (and school fundraiser).

ISSUES

Low levels of food literacy & cooking confidence.

Generational food knowledge gaps – traditions weren't passed on to baby boomers, and they didn't pass on to Gen-X (technology boom – white goods in the 1940's, eating out became more popular).

Indigenous cultural food knowledge gaps – bush tucker gardens and cultural practices sharing with indigenous children and young people.

Marketing budgets for junk food outlets are huge.

BLUE SKY THINKING!

(Children and young people actively participate in food system sites – visiting farms, growing food, making food.

Free cooking on a budget & cultural cooking classes across the shire (with child care).

Ban junk food advertising.

Annual community cooking and baking competition.

ISSUE: LACK OF HEALTH AND FOOD LITERACY (CHILD AND HEALTH VULNERABILITY)

Lack of health and food literacy (knowledge about growing, cooking and eating food), is an issue across the community but particularly in young people and families. This long standing, compounding and intensifying problem is placing a burden on local healthcare systems, impacting the quality of life and life expectancy of our communities young and vulnerable populations, and resulting in an increase in the consumption of packaged food. This has a negative impact on the local and global environment.

Author: Maternal Child Health Nurse

Relevant domains of a food system: **Production, Processing, Consumption & Waste**



ISSUE: CULTURAL CONNECTION TO FOOD

I was grown up around women that would “feed the neighbourhood”. I think it was their way of showing love and care to our community. Everyone knowing they could have a plate of food. It created a closeness and encouraged the congregation that is such an important aspect to our culture. So, in my experience food sharing is a major part of my experience in learning my culture, and my favourite memories too.

I am trying to help improve healthy eating and food security outcomes for Aboriginal people in the Shire. These are some of the ways; the establishment of a local Aboriginal Engagement Group in 2022 and partnering with BDAC (Bendigo District Aboriginal Co-operative) to Co-Chair the group; delivering the annual Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day event and hosting regular “BBQ's for Mob” to better connect our people. I'm trying to build a relationship between the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and Maryborough District Health Service, to have culturally safe services that are accessible to community members.

I haven't personally done any work in the space of healthy eating and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community yet, although as whole I think the statistics on environmental determinants of health, eg. sustainability of employment leading to better access to healthy foods, or better access to Aboriginal based organisations which leads to more access to support for healthy eating. Is a great starting point for myself, creating better access to healthy options, whether it's community BBQ's or partnering with Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation's to support local mob.

The Aboriginal Interpretative Garden that is being built at the hospital is great. As an Aboriginal I love the connection to country, it's a big part of my health and wellbeing. There is nothing like the feeling of being home, your own country. It helps my spirit, my physical and emotional wellbeing. Unfortunately, because we are not from here, me and kids don't get to have much interaction on our own country, we value and appreciate opportunities like this.

Something I'd love to see happen for Aboriginal people in the Central Goldfields would be a community space, to gather. Whether it's for events or just a cuppa and a yarn.

Author: Kimberley Williams, Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer, Maryborough District Health Service

This issue is seen primarily within the **Consumption** area of the food system.



**ISSUE:
INCONSISTENT MESSAGING
AROUND FRESH, SEASONAL
FOODS**

The messaging and marketing of food in the area is a concern held by many, affecting the whole community, and in the power of few, namely our leaders, decision makers and business community. Messaging about healthy eating is very important especially for the most impressionable among us – our children. Some clear and consistent messaging is beginning to emerge in our schools and is quite strong in our early childhood settings, but more action is required to compete with fast and processed food producers that have a very strong advertising presence across the shire (outdoor signage, within supermarkets, and across all form of media).

This messaging promotes highly processed or low nutritional value foods often specifically towards children, combined with the growing perception of healthy options being more expensive; families and children are often unaware of how or why we should be purchasing and consuming local, fresh, and nutritious foods.

Some ways we could turn the dial on this would be; in schools - teach kids to eat healthy, garden and cook for themselves; in our homes - try to respond, some may think that fresh/seasonal is expensive or don't know what to do with it, but if properly educated and supported, this could change; in community – some might set out to buy fresh food, but they are confronted with fast food marketing and options and take the easy route. Overpriced fresh produce doesn't help.

Issue shared by: Gemma Simpson on behalf of the Children & Young People First Partnership Group

Areas of a Food System that this issue connects to:
Marketing and Consumption



**OPPORTUNITY:
FOOD & GARDENING
WORKSHOPS**

We received funding to build capacity in the community and link community groups to bring people together. Initially, there were limited opportunities to build community connections and learn food group skills. Connections had become fractured with COVID lockdown restrictions and a shift in behaviour had been observed. Additionally, the community consists of a variety of residents, meaning different needs require addressing. There are newer residents who have yet to establish connection, younger residents who are yet to develop the skills and knowledge in growing and cooking nutritious food on a budget, and older residents who are at risk of social isolation due to age and decreased mobility.

Upon building community capacity, social networks will be strengthened, and everyday people will develop the skills and knowledge to cook and grow healthy food. A welcoming community space will be enhanced at the Neighbourhood Centre, with open workspaces, meeting rooms, and a kitchen and garden area with fruit trees. The Dunolly Community Garden is currently a vibrant, healthy space for growing fresh produce, and will be utilised by more volunteers. The mulched branches feed the soil at the Dunolly Community Garden, increasing the biodiversity of the soil microbes. This improves soil health and consequently the nutrient levels of fruit and vegetables, resulting in a greater quality and quantity of fresh produce for the kindergarten community and the broader community. Healthy soil will produce healthy food, increasing offerings on the share table, to be consumed by happy, connected people who will also now have the skills to cook healthy meals. This will also significantly reduce the dependence on processed foods and thus the consumption of salt, sugar and fat.

Workshops will be conducted regularly to reach a broad range of participants and will include topics spanning gardening and cooking on a budget.



Issue shared by: Kath Ryan, Dunolly Neighbourhood Centre & Lisa Mahon, Dunolly Community Garden

Areas of a Food System that this issue connects to:
Production and Consumption



ENVIRONMENT, DISTRIBUTION & WASTE

ISSUES

Climate change
Lack of indigenous land management practices.
Limited Council funds.
Unknown food miles.
Lack of connection between farmers and businesses.
Excess packaging.

OPPORTUNITIES

Alignment of environmental and health outcomes – eg. low food miles = low waste.
Community access indigenous gardens and gathering spaces.
Permaculture Principles applied to urban planning.
BYO packaging & wholesale outlets.

BLUE SKY THINKING!

Make towns in the shire '15 Minute Neighbourhoods' – less travel, less food miles, better support for local and smaller producers.
The return of the Agriculture Show.
Neighbourhood-wide home-produce exchange program.

OPPORTUNITY: GROW EDIBLE PLANTS AND POLLINATORS IN ALL OPEN SPACES

Let us imagine a small town where bare, unproductive outdoor space existed. This was observed by an everyday person whose access to fresh, affordable food was limited. Every day as they passed this space, they thought about it and realised that it could become a productive area with food and could be a beautiful, healthy living environment.

They started digging in its earth and planting seeds. More people passing the area joined in. One day the arrival of a bee attracted to this space inspired the people to provide a healthy habitat to encourage all kinds of pollinators to visit – and many winged creatures came.

Gradually this group grew more aware of the importance of healthy biodiversity to increase food production in this space. They shared what they had learnt regarding biodiversity, soil health, healthy microclimates and healthy food with each other and the rest of the community.

The community now had lots of local affordable organic produce and free food. The increased food production meant that they had to deal with gluts of unused food. To minimise food waste issues, they looked at ways of preserving the harvest, sharing with others and education on waste reduction, for example, worm farms and composting.

They developed ideas for future activities like cooking classes, microbusiness opportunities, upcycling, recycling, and composting. They began intentional cooperation with relevant stakeholders which could lead to partnerships being developed with Traditional Owners, Council, businesses, not for profits, education and health institutions and media.

Community Gardens, home gardens, and Street Harvest programs are small ways that we can reclaim our food system. Plant more food than you need and support others to do the same by sharing skills and

knowledge. We can all play a role in shaping a vibrant, ethical food system. Most people want their children to thrive, not just survive. Through gardening, we can create systems that foster vibrant homes and diverse, flourishing communities and ecosystems. Grow more beautiful food in harmony with nature. When you share everything – and inspire even one other person to do the same – you create a beautiful ripple effect. The end.

An Opportunity story based on experience by: Margaret Parsons & Fiona Silver, Maryborough Community Garden / Street Harvest, and Lou Ridsdale, Food is Free.

Areas of a Food System that this issue connects to:
Resource/Waste & Production/Consumption



OPPORTUNITY: SHOPPING WHOLESALE WITH BYO CONTAINERS

Food comes in its own natural packaging, yet our supermarket trolleys are generally filled with more plastic packaging than edible items. We are getting better at reducing packaging for fresh produce – though there is still space for improvement! We also have the opportunity to reduce packaging associated with our pantry and dairy items. Oats, nuts, lentils, flour, milk, honey (and more!) can be supplied in bulk quantities. Customers can then scoop or pour their desired amount into self-supplied reusable containers, bags, jars or bottles. This not only reduces packaging waste, but less food waste is also likely as customers only take what they need. Furthermore, wholesale prices are generally cheaper so this model should result in savings passed onto the customers.

Opportunity shared by: Julia Walsh, Sustainability Officer, Central Goldfields Shire Council

Areas of a Food System that this issue connects to:
Resource & Waste Recovery



ISSUE: FRUIT FLY IN OUR SHIRE



The local environmental conditions have changed, and a new pest that had previously occupied warmer climate zones has starting to inhabit our region. In 2022 the changing climatic conditions saw the unfortunate development of a Queensland Fruit Fly infestation. This is a major biosecurity risk for the community and will impact the ability of people to grow, access and eat fresh fruit.

The recent emergence of fruit fly in our region (in the last 2 years) was detected in sites across Dunolly and Maryborough, and at the Dunolly Community Garden where approximately 30% of their fruit harvest in the 2021/22 Summer Harvest period was lost due to fruit fly contamination. Community gardeners, farmers and consumers stand to be impacted more severely each year if this issue is not addressed quickly. Community gardens and local produce play a key role in food insecurity prevention, and enable social connection in small ageing communities. These operations should be nurtured and addressing the fruit fly problem early allows local producers to flourish.

A targeted fruit fly strategy including mapping of fruit tree locations, a community engagement and education process and distribution of Fruit Fly Traps and an online 'fruit fly suspected or confirmed sightings' map and bait/traps map could be created. Strategic locations of fruit fly traps will support a 'whole of area' coverage and protection regime. This will help reduce fruit fly numbers and reduce food waste. Could Council provide free mulching of pruned fruit trees, rotating through suburbs on a well-publicised schedule? This should be a Council priority – they could also offer free traps, and educational workshops. Furthermore, this model also provides the opportunity for cheaper wholesale prices to be accessed by the customer.

Issue shared by: Lisa Mahon, Dunolly Community Garden

Areas of a Food System that this issue connects to:
Environment



RESOURCING

ISSUES

Untapped community leadership.
The hidden costs of delivering essential services (reliance on volunteers).

Project resource gaps – money and people.

Re-engagement of volunteers (post-covid) – volunteer capacity (community gardens)

“We make a lot of money out of hot chips, how else would we make that?” – sports club position.

OPPORTUNITIES

Harness new and varied funding streams and resource initiatives.

More CSA's – Community Supported Agriculture, like crowd-funding in the food production space.

Inter-School collaborations.

Learn from Kindergartens.

Grassroots activities – link up neighbourhood house programs and spaces.

Parent Volunteers in schools – support them to gain their Working with Children Checks.

BLUE SKY THINKING!

Council creates a position for a Community Action Coordinator who applies for grants and offers administrative support to community-led initiatives.

OPPORTUNITY: COMMUNITY COMPOSTING & SHARING YOUR WHEELBARROWS

Sustainable practices are skills that can be passed on from neighbour to neighbour.

Before the community garden introduced the community compost drop off, many people put their food leftovers or spoiled produce into the general waste household bin. This was a lost opportunity to make use of a valuable, beneficial resource.

Introducing this new system, including one at the school, allowed the community to build sustainable habits and introduce more practices that benefit both the environment and community! Since then, the community garden has also started a chook co-op for eggs, organic fertilisers to use at home, and community food gardens. This has helped immensely reduce food waste while enabling more fresh food to grow, imbedding valuable, lifelong sustainability skills throughout the community as individuals participate in climate change mitigation.

Empowering the community with the knowledge and skills to make healthy, sustainable choices, while strengthening their social connectedness, has also manifested into community members sharing resources, knowledge, and manpower with each other. One community member recounts,

“I am a gardener, and like many others, we often have an excess amount of nectarines in summer and needed the use of a wheelbarrow. I was picking rotten nectarines off the ground and didn't have room for a compost. But one day my neighbour asked for some nectarines (she didn't have much money). Her neighbour had a trailer (wheelbarrow) to help pick up the nectarines.”

Using this model of barter and trade, and sharing resources, helps more people secure the means to produce their own food and make use of composting. Community members have reduced food wastage and throwing out excess fruit as a result, thus reducing input costs for small scale gardening and seed sharing.

Opportunity by: Senior Constable Chris Jeffery, Maryborough Police, Victoria

Areas of a Food System this opportunity connects to: Food Production, Resource & Waste



OPPORTUNITY: GROWING OUR CONNECTIONS

There is a need for continued support to current groups working in food security and food system awareness, and sharing information about what people are doing and what resources are available to better support their activities. There are lots of individuals and groups working in this space, but their connection to each other is limited. Perhaps if a community map was developed - including food access points, common public shared fruit trees, active groups and organisations and their contact information - the whole community would benefit. Support could be provided to help current and emerging projects and initiatives.

The establishment of this Network and the local Food Alliance Network can lead to more fresh food being available to parts of the community who really need it. Surplus food waste is reduced and quality of life improved and through this more of the community can care for each other - mutual aid = mutual benefit.

This would mean healthy food for all, and all fruit and vegetables grown and harvested are consumed. And the moral of the story is that ...greater capacity within the community; ways found to translate readiness into action.

The assets needed that will help with this opportunity are; a paid coordinator, more food sharing spaces, mapping tools and newsletter production

Workshop idea by: Jeannie Clarke, Maryborough Community House & other workshop participants

Areas of a Food System this opportunity connects to: All areas



INDUSTRY PRESSURES & POWER DYNAMICS

ISSUES

People are used to eating 'perfect' looking non-seasonal foods from supermarkets which makes real/organic/seasonal food look 'imperfect'.

Community readiness to change.

Lack of Food Co-ops and (SA's (Community Supported Agriculture).

Viability of small-town producers and businesses up against Supermarkets bulk buying power.

Food is politicised & ties up with power in small towns – supermarkets, sugar, fast food.

ISSUE: RISING FARMING COSTS

Local farmers, particularly small-scale farmers, are feeling pressures associated with the increased cost of production. Stricter rules and regulations are resulting in smaller profit margins and forcing many small-scale producers to sell farms and businesses on to larger corporations. While impacting the mental health of farmers, who are already a high-risk group, this also increasing the possibility of families moving out of the region as farmers are forced to sell, leading to a decrease in the disposable income in the community.

Issue shared by: Liesbeth Long, 5th Generation Farmer and Councillor

Areas of a Food System this opportunity connects to: **Production**



OPPORTUNITIES

Commercial production of indigenous food crops.
Better develop and harness our local food bowl.

Get the (EO's and Board members of all large agencies and businesses together to tackle large issues on a regular basis.

BLUE SKY THINKING!

Restrict supermarkets from selling fruit and vegetables, to better support farmers and producers, pay what it costs.

Incentivise the return of more small produce outlets, butchers and green grocers etc.

Cultural, sustainability and access lenses applied in decision-making at all levels.

The AFL removes registration fees for small clubs! Removing their need to get sponsorship from fast food outlets and promote their products to young people.



OPPORTUNITY: MEAT PROCESSING IN CENTRAL GOLDFIELDS

I am a 5th generation farmer in the Central Goldfields. I am concerned that without change we will continue to experience pressures and barriers to growth. Today, meat comes to supermarkets and butchers in boxes from faraway places. And processing facilities are also faraway.

Farmers must adjust their production systems to meet the requirements of the processors that they can access and travel long distances with cargo to access them. Animals travel far, in big trucks and can lose condition, quality and value along the way. I would like to see a cooperative of local farmers got together and create a mobile abattoir and processing hub to take control of their own products and supplied happy healthy meat to our local community.

Perhaps this would lead to more viable farms, and see families return, new farms created, and food miles reduced. Creating a stronger local farming population might mean that everyone knows a farmer, and because of that, the mystery of where meat comes from and the factors that are needed to develop a more abundant local industry would be better understood.

Our community could thrive, and tourism could boom! Farms would be able to close the loop and reduce inputs and increase local benefits of sustainable and healthy farms. Bigger is not always better, and we can turn back time in the meat processing system to smaller local facilities.

What would help realise this opportunity? Interested farmers - support to engage; Funding for trial - mobile or local abattoir / processing and butcher; Marketing and distribution.

Opportunity shared by: Liesbeth Long, 5th Generation Farmer and Councillor

Areas of a Food System this opportunity connects to: **Processing & Distribution**



OPPORTUNITIES: IF I WAS THE MAYOR FOR A DAY, I WOULD MAKE MY NEIGHBOURHOOD A HEALTHIER PLACE BY...

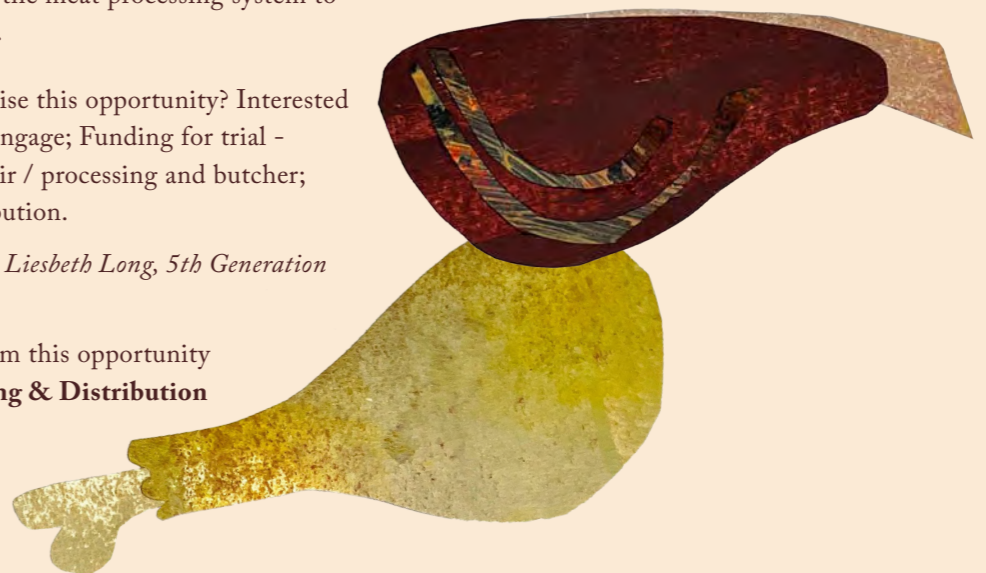
Making a week in every month in my town called Healthy Week! During this week you are not allowed to eat unhealthy food, but you can still eat things like meat because meat has protein in it. And I would knock on everyone's door every second day and give them a big box fruit and vegetables.

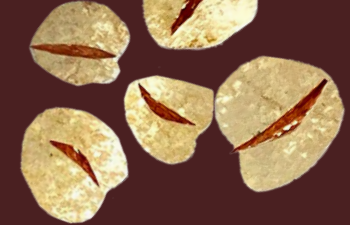
Putting more small shops in the neighbourhood and more healthy places for us.

Making sure that all the fast-food places would be moved far away so then people would have to walk or drive to go get it - and then they choose healthy food instead of junk food.

Ideas shared by: Central Goldfields Youth, via the Young People First Partnership

Connects to: **Preparation & Consumption, Marketing, Markets & Purchasing**





DISCUSSION & NEXT STEPS



ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The stories, insights and ideas in the previous pages show that our community is diverse, passionate and knowledgeable. There is a willingness for individuals and organisations to contribute time, resources and effort into creating meaningful and sustainable transformation. While it is important to bring expertise into our community for growth, it is equally important to acknowledge the leadership that is already here.

When we learn about the work that each other are doing we gain a deeper understanding of the moving parts of our landscape, and our food system, and we are better positioned to create effective and lasting change where it is needed most. And when we do act, we can be sure that it will be impactful because it is grounded in authentic local knowledge. When we can agree to shared priorities, the next steps become clearer, and the actions that follow will carry the strength of a partnership that is rooted in lived experience and knowledge.

Themes of access, equity, transport, income, education, climate change, values, and power emerged as the most common throughout topic discussions. Some change can be created at a grass-roots level, however much of it must be achieved by our legislative and business leaders. We urge these people to join this conversation and commit to listening to even the smallest voices. Then take the learnings and innovate and collaborate to give Central Goldfields one of the most outstanding food systems models in our region.

The Central Goldfields Shire Council has begun work to establish a Food Systems Strategy. Working with SUSTAIN – the Australian Food Network they will investigate the frameworks of food system components, the dimensions of food security, and how the system could be improved. They will rely heavily on this paper and will dive deeper into the findings to better understand barriers to progress and how these could be shifted.

The following page demonstrates how we can take the issues, opportunities and blue sky thinking captured throughout our engagement and group them to produce action plans for community-led change. These examples could be the basis of place-based solutions to local issues. We hope that this inspires and contributes to whatever comes next.



PUTTING DISCUSSION INTO ACTION

ISSUES

Vulnerability Indicators

OPPORTUNITIES

Actions for Change

BLUE SKY THINKING

Outcomes / Long-Term Goals

Low levels of food literacy and cooking confidence.

Perceptions that it is easier and cheaper to buy 'junk food' than fresh food.

Courses and guides on how to use the whole vegetable, reduce waste, preserve, freeze, and ultimately spend less on fresh produce.

Weekly farmer / small producer markets in each town.

(Cooking, gardening, (and composting) classes in schools.

Allyship with Dja Dja Wurrung.

Children and young people actively participate in food system areas – visiting farms, growing food, making food, understanding waste as 'resource'.

Free cooking classes for new parents, elderly, tight budgets, and cultural connection, are available across the shire (with childcare).

Edible garden beds everywhere.

Food as part of the landscape.

Food Hubs – BBQ areas with camp kitchens, veggie gardens and community classrooms.

Transport and Housing, access to storage, kitchens, spaces to grow, prepare and share food.

Rising costs of groceries and food production.

More community gardens.

Verge veggies.

More donation and collection points for free food in the shire.

Food Strategies with Access and Equity lenses.

"We make a lot of money out of hot chips, how else would we make that?" – sports club position (money is needed for registrations etc).

Get the CEO's and Board members of all large agencies and businesses together to tackle large issues on a regular basis.

The AFL removes registration fees for small clubs! Removing their need to get sponsorship from fast food outlets and promote their products to young people.

INSPIRATIONAL COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

MODELS WE CAN LEARN FROM

Here we highlight some great examples of models of change in neighbouring areas that could be adapted for our shire. With the right resourcing versions of these ideas could be adopted as community-led and social-entrepreneurship initiatives to create sustainable change and industry growth in our region.

YIMBY COMMUNITY COMPOSTING

Yes In My Back Yard – YIMBY – Growing community, soil and resilience on Dja Dja Wurrung country. YIMBY is a community-run backyard composting project based in Castlemaine, Victoria. It is a scalable trial of community compost hubs, linking people keen to compost, with those who aren't, in neighbourhood clusters. Dedicated 'collectors' travel the neighbourhood to registered households and collect their compostable organic matter and turn it into usable hot garden compost. The project will support neighbourhood resilience and reduce the amount of organics reaching landfill, while allowing those who can't manage a compost system at their homes to contribute to the goals of the project.

www.yimbycompost.com

CSA'S - COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a subscription model supporting local farmers – where all customers share in the rewards of a bountiful harvest, and the risks of crop failures. It is a model of food production and distribution that directly connects farmers and consumers. From veggie boxes to milk and yoghurt supply, this small-scale framing approach is readily applicable and has numerous benefits for land care, industry and community.

VEGGIE GARDENS IN SCHOOLS & SPORTS SETTINGS

Through school gardens, children experience the rewards of fresh produce and the process that brings them to pass. They learn to understand the natural growth of plants — from seeds to sprouts to flowers to fruits — and the impact that rain, drought and other forces of nature have on plant life. Students learn valuable life skills such as how to look after the soil and plants and how to turn food waste into healthy soil. They start to understand where food comes from, and the cycle it goes through. They learn the importance of healthy vegetables and how they contribute to our own health. They also get the opportunity to experience working as a team toward a common goal. Although there aren't many sports clubs are starting to get on board and grow veggie gardens at club venues as well.



GROW A ROW, PICK A BRANCH

Grow a Row or Pick a Branch is a grassroots community project that encourages local people from across Central Victoria to plant extra crops in their gardens or harvest their excess fruit and vegetables with the intention of donating it to Bendigo Foodshare to redistribute as food.

As we all know, it's important to eat a wide range of foods with sufficient high-quality proteins, carbohydrates, heart-healthy fats, vitamins, minerals and water to maintain a healthy body and lifestyle.

The diminishing ability of low-income families to pay for healthy food is consigning the least well-off in our community to a greater risk of diet-related illness, such as obesity and diabetes, as well as widening health inequalities.

By actively increasing our supplies of fresh fruit and vegetables, we hope to boost the amount of healthy food available relief for people who've fallen on tough times.

MOBILE ABATTOIRS

Boutique butchery, Provenir secured a licence from the Victorian Food Safety Authority to operate its mobile abattoir in Victoria in 2020. The company, which launched in 2019 after receiving the go-ahead from the NSW Food Authority, began to operate as the first mobile abattoir in the state.

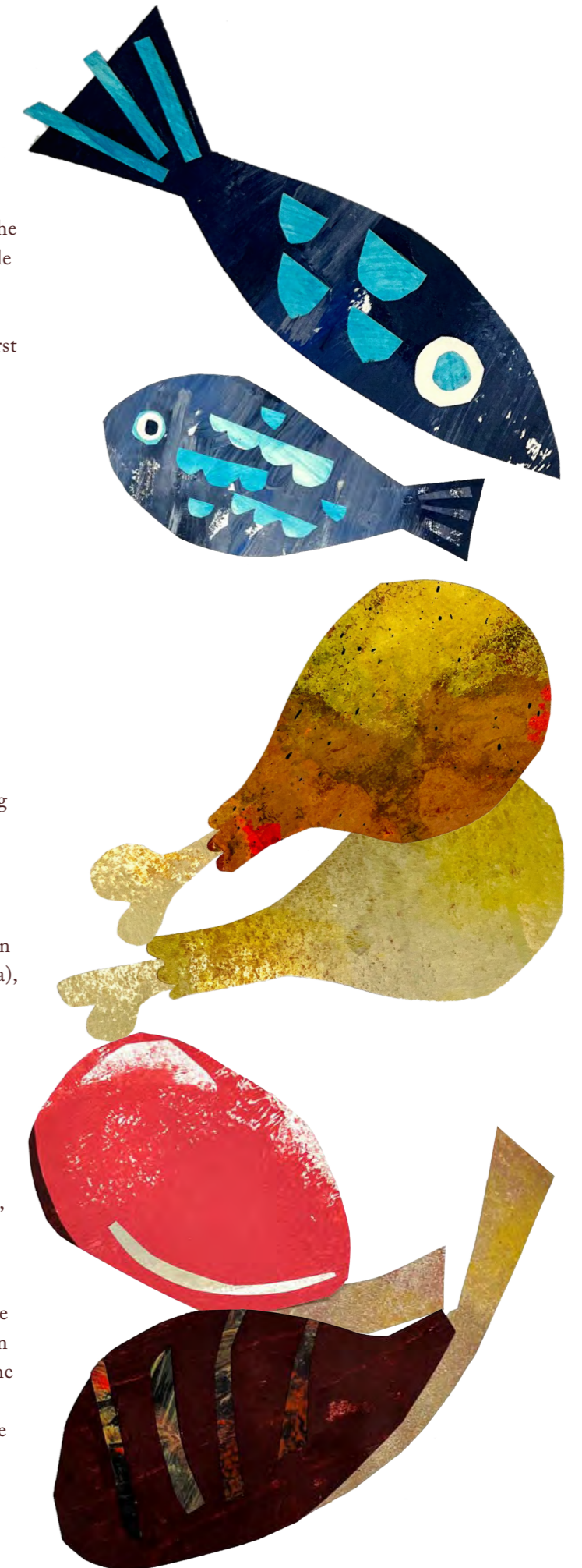
Provenir was established to improve animal welfare and meat quality by deploying an abattoir on wheels. The company says its production solution is the most sustainable on the market, allowing livestock to be processed on the farm where they were raised, eliminating unnecessary stress on animals associated with live transport and decreasing food miles.

The consolidation of abattoirs in recent times has required livestock to be transported, often over long distances to the processors. It was a long road to licensure for the Provenir founding team, four of whom live in Victoria, who were determined to gain a licence to operate in their home state. Since setting out on the journey in April 2014 the team have participated in a novel meat supply study, consulted with industry experts, liaised with all levels of Government, worked Agriculture Victoria to change the law, to include the word "vehicle" to the definition of abattoir in the Meat Industries Act 1993 (Victoria), and consulted with PrimeSafe (the Victorian Food Safety Authority) to develop a new Vehicle Based Abattoir licence category.

Consumer support for the on-farm processed meat has been strong since day one and this was clearly demonstrated through a pre-launch crowdfunding campaign in which the company raised over \$68,000, securing more than 220 pre-sales of the company's highest welfare Meat Packs.

Provenir co-founder and farmer, Chris Balazs was the first farmer in Victoria to have his cattle processed on his property SageFarm at Bannockburn, located in the Golden Plains Shire of Victoria. Provenir welcomes expressions of interest from Victorian grass-fed cattle farmers, particularly those practicing regenerative farming and turning off 100+ head per year.

www.provenir.com.au





LIMITATIONS

This document reflects a point in time and is based only on the shared discussions of a group of people in the meetings and workshops mentioned within. There are many more voices within, and connected to, our community that could join this conversation, from supermarkets to freight companies, and we invite them to do so at any time.

DISCLAIMER

The opinions and views reflected in this document are of individual contributing engagement participants, and not necessarily the views or opinions of the Central Goldfields Food Network as a whole.



Healthy Kids Advisors is a 3-year initiative supported by the Victorian Government and the Australian Government