



Internal ‘thinking’ paper for Regional Public Health: Identifying ways to impact food insecurity in the Wellington region

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Purpose

This paper aims to raise awareness of the current and potential work that could be considered by Regional Public Health, and the wider sector to improve our effectiveness in addressing food security issues. While the primary audience for this work is Regional Public Health we recognise that stakeholders in other organisations may also find this information of value to support their work.

Background

Food is necessary for our growth, health and survival. However, for many, especially Māori, Pacific and those on low incomes, it is increasingly a struggle to put food on the table [1, 2]. The availability or supply, access, cost and knowledge of healthy food, and cooking skills are some of the broad themes that have been identified as impacting food security. Interventions spread across a range of physical, economic, political and socio-cultural factors in the social system [3] are needed to address this issue. Local research suggests action ideally should be led by government, iwi, pan tribal organisations, community and the food industry and be underpinned by research and evaluation.

Regional Public Health has identified a need to look more closely at the work currently being undertaken to impact food security especially for Māori and Pacific children (up to 25 years) and those living in low income households within the Wellington region. The primary aim of this project was to identify gaps in work, to help Regional Public Health determine its role and how to effectively impact food insecurity.

Recommendations from recent local and national research [3-10] have been used to identify potential ways to influence food security. The five focus areas identified in the draft Agencies for Nutrition Vision 2022 [11] have been used to provide an overarching framework for action needed to address this issue:

1. Increasing capacity and leadership of whānau and communities e.g. cooking skills, fostering traditional Māori food sources, improving community access to healthy food (such as gardens, markets, food stores, affordability of food)
2. Supporting cross sector action such as a food policy council or coalition
3. Encouraging action across the food chain e.g. food industry and government
4. Environmental policies around accessing safe food and water
5. Continuing to build the evidence base for action.

Discussions with local providers of nutrition and physical activity have helped identify current work being undertaken to address food insecurity locally. This has helped establish the gaps and future work that could potentially be undertaken by Regional Public Health and other local organisations. The list of activities outlined below is not exhaustive and their impacts on food security have not necessarily been well studied.

Regional Public Health has determined its priorities in 2013 to address food insecurity will include:

- Development of a 'healthy kai' project in one low socioeconomic town centre
- Improving the availability and access to information about nutrition services such as gardening and cooking skills on the Regional Public Health website
- Implementation of Workplace Health and Wellness Programmes in several high need workplaces
- Lead discussion with stakeholders to identify ways to improve access to the Disability Allowance (for food).

Review of research recommendations, current work and gaps to manage food insecurity

Agencies for Nutrition Action (ANA) Nutrition Vision 2020 (Draft Only)	Recommendations of ENHANCE [3] research	Recommendations from other local research	Existing activity in the Wellington Region	What does Regional Public Health do now?	What could Regional Public Health and other organisations potentially do in the future to impact food security?
<p>1. Increasing capacity and leadership of whānau and communities to improve access to safe, healthy and affordable food</p>	<p><i>Food purchasing influences e.g. cooking skills</i></p>	<p>Practical skills taught in schools and community with a focus on healthy, affordable, easy, culturally appropriate meals and menu planning [2, 3, 5].</p>	<p>Community and school cooking programmes are provided by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supergrans. • Te Awakairangi Primary Health Organisation's (PHO), Good Food Programme. • WellHealth PHO can respond as part of nutrition and physical activity and lifestyle programmes or if requested and group can fund the resources needed. • Wellington Timebank wellingtontimebank.org.nz – offer opportunities to seek or offer cooking and other skills. 	<p>A literature review has been undertaken by Nutrition Foundation and Massey University to assess the impact of school cooking skills on food security in response to need identified by Public Health Dietitians' Special Interest Group.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use research on school cooking skills and food security and local champions to drive advocacy around the need for more practical cooking skills in schools. • Extend research and advocacy to community cooking skills and its impact on food security.
		<p>Evaluate community based cooking skills programmes [3].</p>	<p>No known activity.</p>	<p>No known activity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify community cooking skills programmes and evaluation to support models for best practise. • Support further evaluation and implementation of sustainable community cooking skills programmes.
		<p>Information on budgeting [2] and cooking skills services [6].</p>	<p>The 'Survival Guide to Wellington' lists budgeting services in the Wellington region. Other services are offered by Kokiri Marae, Wairarapa Free Budget, Wesley Community Center, and Supergrans.</p>	<p>Use of website to promote access to healthy food such as budgeting services, cooking skills programmes, community gardens and markets and breast feeding support.</p>	<p>Continue to promote ways communities can improve access to affordable healthy food.</p>

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	Foster and encourage traditional Māori food sources	Research and development of traditional food related projects [3, 5] e.g. how to establish a tapapa (kumara) bed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tukurumuri School, Wairarapa, have established a Māori Medicinal Herb Garden. • Enviro Schools. • Kokiri Planting projects. 	No known activity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate projects to foster and support traditional Māori food sources. • Provide leadership around best practise initiatives to foster and encourage traditional Māori food sources.
	Community access to healthy food	<i>Gardens and markets</i> Support and evaluate low cost fresh produce markets, gardens [2, 3, 5] and community food centres including food literacy and local sustainable food systems [12, 13].	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wesley Community Action Community Garden project. • School, home and community gardens. • Wairarapa, Newtown and Porirua markets. • Vegetable boxes distributed from many community centres. 	<p>Promotion of markets and gardens on Regional Public Health website.</p> <p>Submissions to promote gardens and markets e.g. Council Annual and Long Term Plans, Open Spaces and Recreation Plans.</p>	<p>Identify the most effective communication channels to access our key stakeholders to promote food security initiatives.</p> <p>Promote, support and evaluate gardens, markets and community food centres in low socioeconomic communities for the development of gardening, markets, cooking skills.</p>
		Trial and evaluate [3] alternative solutions (where markets and gardens are not feasible) e.g. subsidised fruit and vegetable food boxes or mobile vendors. food cooperatives [5, 7], church programmes [3] or bartering/trading and sharing of kai [5].	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University of Otago, Out of Box, [14] and Mobile Food Vendor research [15]. • Community meals e.g. Meals on Wheels; Bellyful – meals from Mum to Mum. 	No known activity.	Investigate the need and alternative ways to increase access to healthy food e.g. subsidised fruit and vegetable boxes, food cooperatives.
		Toolkits to support community gardens, community kitchens [5, 6]			Create toolkits to support ways to improve access to affordable healthy foods such as the development of a food cooperative, community kitchen, gardens and market.

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		<p><i>Local food supply – Food Stores</i></p> <p>Promote access to healthy food stores e.g. attract a supermarket to underserved areas [7] or explore transport options to supermarkets where access is poor [2, 3, 6].</p>	<p>Fresh Choice Greytown provides a bus from Featherston for shopping.</p>	<p>No known activity.</p>	<p>Work with food industry to research transport options to supermarkets to provide isolated communities with better access to affordable food.</p>
		<p>Investigate ways to improve access to healthier, more affordable foods within food stores e.g. use of positioning [3], incentives [7], healthier food products and meal combinations [3], lower pricing of healthy foods and menu labelling [3], champions and point of purchase information [2].</p> <p>Offer lower fat milk and grainy breads at same price as less healthy alternatives [2].</p>	<p>Monday Meal Deal at Pak ‘n’ Save, Masterton.</p>	<p>2013 ‘Healthy Kai’ project plan developed (including funding, partnerships and priority needs).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with supermarkets e.g. Pak ‘n’ Save who have weekly ‘meal deals’ to make these healthy options. • Implement a ‘Healthy Kai’ type project in the town center of low income communities. • Include the promotion of breastfeeding as ‘super kai’ as part of a ‘Healthy Kai’ programme.
		<p><i>Local food supply – other</i></p> <p>Map fruit trees [8], community cafes, commercial kitchen hire, community meals [8].</p>	<p>Some services e.g. food banks and community meal services are outlined both online and in booklets e.g. Wellington City Council Survival Guide.</p>		<p>Identify if adequate information and promotion is available locally on low cost community meals and fruit trees.</p>

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		Environmental audits [7] to map access to food stores.	No known activity.	Environmental audit of food stores in Porirua East [7].	Work with Clinical Leadership and Intelligence Group (CLIG) to identify community profiles and audits of food stores in other high need localities.
		Consider healthy food in town planning [2] and strategic planning documents e.g. Long Term Planning process [7] and ways to balance healthy and unhealthy food options.	No known activity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submissions to Council Long Term Plans, Annual Plans, Recreation and Park and Open Spaces submissions. • Healthy Open Spaces: A summary of the impact of open spaces on healthy and well being. 	Collate evidence to strengthen approaches Councils could use to improve access to healthy food e.g. food quality licensing of food outlets, regulation of fast food intensification around schools and hospitals (see Toi Te Ora toolkit -soon to be published) and the UK Sustain Planning for Good Food .
		<p>'Healthy' 'procurement standards' and 'food policy' in high need workplaces [2] and local government venues.</p> <p>Role modelling of socially and culturally appropriate nutrition messages [7].</p>	<p>A number of health promoting programmes support healthy catering guidelines and healthy food policy e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Cancer Society men's workplace wellness programmes Get the Tools. • Early Childhood Centres and Health Promoting Schools. • Kokiri Marae. <p>Well Health work with primary providers to deliver culturally appropriate food messages and training.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Public Health 'Workplace Health and Wellness Guide' supports healthy procurement policy. • Advocacy surrounding healthy food policy in council owned venues and HVDHB food services. • Wairarapa Healthy Lifestyles Programme with focus on weight loss, exercise and healthy eating. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic advocacy with workplace managers of high need communities to develop 'procurement standards' for healthy food e.g. prisons, workplaces, hospitals, schools, early childhood centres, council owned facilities, marae. • Include breastfeeding within policies to ensure awareness of legislation and best practises for breast feeding mothers to return to work.
		<i>Promotion</i> Support other health organisations e.g. Primary Health	No known activity.	Workshops have been undertaken to raise the awareness of barriers to accessing healthy food.	

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		Organisations to advocate for improved affordable food access [7].		Development of tools to support communities to engage in the policy development processes.	Utilise tools to engage vulnerable communities in policy development to support easier access to healthy foods.
		Easy front of package food labelling system [7].	Submissions by others e.g. Agencies for Nutrition Action (ANA), Dietitians New Zealand (DNZ).	No known activity.	Take opportunities to support submissions on food labelling; food advertising and breastfeeding.
		<i>Cost of healthy food</i> Lower food prices e.g. Government Services tax (GST) off fruit and vegetables [2], Smart card/voucher system for healthy food [2, 3, 7].	Heart Foundation Position Statements Tertiary level research.	No known activity.	Identify and advocate Regional Public Health's position on the best ways to impact the affordability of healthy food.
		Ongoing monitoring of the percentage of low incomes needed to purchase a healthy diet [10].		2010-2011 Food Costs paper.	Five yearly update of the food costs paper (2017) - Consider including the extra food costs of breast and formula feeding.
		Monitor impact of changes in social welfare policy and benefit levels on communities [16].	Couch potato award (Australia).	No known activity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk with Salvation Army regarding monitoring impacts of social welfare changes on food security. • Support the development of a Couch Potato award in New Zealand.
		<i>Breastfeeding</i> [17]	Breastfeeding Centres Plunket Family Centres	Breastfeeding services are promoted on website.	Support breastfeeding rates by encouraging and exploring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baby Friendly Hospital and Community Initiatives.

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					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Māori for Māori support workers. • Transport options to breastfeeding support centres. • Stocktake and display of breastfeeding support available. • Advocacy for breastfeeding in the school curriculum. • Consistent messaging to advocate for breastfeeding.
<p>2. Cross sectorial action e.g. food policy coalition</p>		<p>Stock take all food security related initiatives [6].</p>	<p>Wellington City Council Edible Wellington Snapshot (mapping of existing food activities and initiatives) [9].</p>	<p>This report can be found on the Regional Public Health website.</p>	<p>Engage councils to stocktake food security related initiatives in other localities.</p>
		<p>Initiate and advocate for a strategic approach to food security e.g. Food Network or Food Policy Council [16], Food Strategy [6, 9].</p>	<p>Wellington Urban Agriculture Group Auckland Food Alliance</p>	<p>A meeting with the food sector has been initiated by Wellington City Council.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and maintain strong sector networks including those with the food industry to support food security. • Support development of a regional food strategy.
<p>3. Action across the food supply chain e.g. stocking of healthy food in stores</p>	<p>Food purchasing influences e.g. food industry, government</p>	<p>Formalise links and partnerships with food industry to investigate ways to influence marketing and pricing of healthy food [3, 5, 10].</p>	<p>Heart Foundation 'Hospitality Hub' Industry food reformulation [2] Chip Group Best Frying Practises Auckland and Paeroa 'Healthy Kai' type projects to improve access and availability of healthy food in food stores. Fuelled4Life</p>	<p>Food store owner research [10]. 2012 Project activity aims to support engagement of likeminded organisations to address the pricing, promotion and stocking of healthy and affordable foods in food stores.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop guidelines to support ethics of association with the food industry. • Collate and undertake research to identify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Influences on food suppliers and distributors[10]. - Strategies to price and promote more healthy foods [3, 5, 7, 18]. • Undertake a 'Healthy Kai' type project to support improved access to healthy and affordable foods.

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		Tools to support food store owners business/marketing of healthy food [8, 10].	Resources have been developed as part of a Paeroa 'Healthy Kai' project.		Further development and dissemination of resources to support a local 'healthy kai' project.
	Money available in households e.g. income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More income [2, 3, 7] e.g. review of benefit entitlements. • Full and correct benefit entitlements[3]. • Fringe Lender responsibility [3]. 	<p>Health and Income Working Group.</p> <p>Community led work in this area.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Public Health representative on Health and Income Working Group. • Training of community health workers around Income Benefit Rights. • Regional Public Health discussion paper identifying barriers to accessing the Disability Allowance (for food). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and advocate Regional Public Health's position on the best ways to impact income and affordability of healthy food. • Engage key stakeholders to find ways to improve access to the Disability Allowance (for food).
		Provision of subsidised food in schools [2, 3, 16].	Nationally funded Fruit in Schools programme; Voluntary organisations for example KidsCan and food industry such as Fonterra providing milk in schools.	Submissions around Early Childhood Centres and Health Promoting School activities.	
		Monitor food poverty by developing a reporting system for organisations providing food to families to be shared with the food council or network [16].	Whangarei research quantified food being provided free to families as a measure of hardship [16].	No known activity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk with food agencies to determine if measures are needed to assess the levels of food poverty in our local communities. • Identify and support advocacy around effective national policy solutions to food poverty.
4. Environmental policy around accessing safe		Strategic approach to community growing and harvesting activities.	Nelson Marlborough District Health Board, Nga Marama planting and harvesting guide supports schools		Explore local work and needs to improve access to traditional healthy food.

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food and water			to revisit traditional food collection and planting) [4].		
5. Build on the evidence base		<p>Explore ways government can impact affordability and access to healthy food [3, 10].</p> <p>Explore how food costs are accumulated and how they could be manipulated to favour healthy food [3].</p> <p>Food basket research e.g. cost comparison of food across areas and types of food stores [3, 6, 7].</p> <p>Calculate retail food index for all mesh blocks and census units across New Zealand [7].</p> <p>What is the Primary Health Organisations role in advocacy for healthy food? [7].</p> <p>Trial and evaluate Health Impact Assessment to enhance food security for Maori, Pacific and low income New Zealanders [3, 6].</p> <p>Develop a nationally recognised standard or benchmark for assessing the percentage of low income appropriate to</p>	No known activity.	No known activity.	Work with academic institutions to engage and support research to raise our understanding and work in food security.

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		spend on food.			
6. Other activities not identified elsewhere		<p>Pacific appropriate programmes [2]. Workforce development [2].</p> <p>Strengthen Regional Public Health submissions process.</p>	<p>Projects being developed through the Ministry of Health Pacific Innovation Fund</p> <p>National Heart Foundation Courses e.g. Pacific nutrition courses and Healthy Eating Action and Training (HEAT) for those working in the commercial hospitality arena.</p>	<p>Funding provided to support Pacific people to attend train the trainer courses.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate and promote nutrition courses that maybe of value to people working in high need communities. • Clearly identify Regional Public Health's position on issues for advocacy. • Develop a clear evidence based strategic direction for submissions. • Follow up submissions to determine what has been listened too.

Recommendations for action

This process has helped to identify potential work needed to impact local food security. Regional Public Health will use these recommendations in its yearly project planning to identify its focus to support improving food security in the region. Other organisations may also find these recommendations useful to support their own work in the field.

1. Increasing capacity and leadership of whānau and communities to improve access to safe, healthy and affordable food

Food purchasing influences e.g. cooking skills

- 1.1. Use research on school cooking skills and food security and local champions to drive advocacy around the need for more practical cooking skills in schools.
- 1.2. Extend research and advocacy to community cooking skills and its impact on food security.
- 1.3. Identify community cooking skills programmes and evaluation to support models for best practise..
- 1.4. Support further evaluation and implementation of sustainable community cooking skills programmes.
- 1.5. Continue to promote ways communities can improve access to affordable healthy food.

Foster and encourage traditional Māori food sources

- 1.6. Investigate projects to foster and encourage traditional Māori food sources. Provide leadership around best practise initiatives to foster and encourage traditional Māori food sources.

Community access to healthy food

Gardens and markets

- 1.7. Identify the most effective communication channels to access our key stakeholders to promote food security initiatives.
- 1.8. Promote, support and evaluate gardens, markets and community food centres in low socioeconomic communities for the development of gardening, markets, cooking skills.
- 1.9. Investigate the need and alternative ways to increase access to healthy food e.g. subsidised fruit and vegetable boxes, food cooperatives.
- 1.10. Create toolkits to support ways to improve access to affordable healthy food such as the development of a food cooperative, community kitchen, gardens and markets.

Food stores

- 1.11. Work with food industry to research transport options to supermarkets to provide isolated communities with better access to affordable food.
- 1.12. Work with supermarkets e.g. Pak 'n' Save who have weekly 'meal deals' to make these healthy options.
- 1.13. Implement a 'Healthy Kai' type project in the town centre of low income communities.
- 1.14. Include the promotion of breastfeeding as 'super kai' as part of a 'Healthy Kai' programme.

Local food supply

- 1.15. Identify if adequate information and promotion is available locally on low cost community meals and fruit trees.
- 1.16. Work with Clinical Leadership and Intelligence Group (CLIG) to identify community profiles and audits of food stores in other high need localities.
- 1.17. Collate evidence to strengthen approaches local councils could use to improve access to healthy food e.g. food quality licensing of food outlets, regulation of fast food intensification around schools and hospitals
- 1.18. Strategic advocacy with workplace managers of high need communities to develop 'procurement standards' for healthy food e.g. prisons, workplaces, hospitals, schools, early childhood centres, council owned facilities, marae.
- 1.19. Include breastfeeding within work policies to ensure awareness of legislation and best practises for breast feeding mothers to return to work.

Promotion

- 1.20. Utilise tools to engage vulnerable communities in policy development to support easier access to healthy foods.
- 1.21. Take opportunities to support submissions on food labelling, food advertising and breastfeeding.

Cost of healthy food

- 1.22. Identify and advocate Regional Public Health's position on the best ways to impact the affordability of healthy food.
- 1.23. Five yearly update of the food costs paper (2017) - Consider including the extra food costs of breast and formula feeding.
- 1.24. Talk with Salvation Army regarding monitoring impacts of social welfare changes on food security.
- 1.25. Support the development of a Couch Potato award in New Zealand.

Support breastfeeding rates by encouraging and exploring

- 1.26. Baby Friendly Hospital and Community initiatives.
- 1.27. Māori for Māori support workers to improve breast feeding rates.
- 1.28. Transport options to breastfeeding support centres.
- 1.29. Stocktake and display of breastfeeding support availability.
- 1.30. Advocacy for breastfeeding in the school curriculum.
- 1.31. Consistent messaging to advocate for breastfeeding.

2. Cross sectorial action e.g. food policy coalition/councils

- 2.1. Engage other councils to stocktake food security related initiatives in other localities
- 2.2. Develop and maintain strong sector networks including those with the food industry.
- 2.3. Support development of a regional food strategy.

3. Action across the food supply chain e.g. stocking of healthy food in stores

Food purchasing influences e.g. food industry, government

- 3.1. Develop guidelines to support ethics of association with the food industry.
- 3.2. Undertake research to identify:
 - Influences on food suppliers and distributors [10]
 - Strategies to price and promote more healthy foods [3, 5, 7, 18]
- 3.3. Undertake a 'Healthy Kai' type project to support improve access to healthy and affordable foods.
- 3.4. Further development and dissemination of resources to support a local 'Healthy Kai' project.

Money available in households e.g. income

- 3.5. Identify and advocate Regional Public Health's position on the best ways to impact income and affordability of healthy food.
- 3.6. Engage stakeholders to find ways to improve access to the Disability Allowance (for food).
- 3.7. Talk with food agencies to determine if measures are needed to assess the levels of food poverty in our local communities.
- 3.8. Identify and support advocacy around effective national policy solutions to food poverty.

4. Environmental policy around accessing safe food and water

- 4.1. Explore local work and needs to improve access to traditional healthy foods.

5. Build on the evidence base

- 5.1. Work with academic institutions to engage and support research to support our understanding and work in food security.

6. Other activities not identified elsewhere

- 6.1. Investigate access to nutrition courses that maybe of value to people working in high need communities.
- 6.2. Strengthen regional Public Health submissions process:
 - Develop a clear position on issues to use in advocacy.
 - Develop a clear evidence based strategic direction for submissions.
 - Follow up submissions to determine what has been listened too.

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