



Kai and Our Community Regional Food Network Submission to the Wellington Regional Growth Framework

Background for submission WRGF

In 2020 Common Unity Project Aotearoa (CUPA) and Regional Public Health (RPH) began a partnership to develop a food network across the region with the aim to include all 'players' involved in the food space.

Our approach to this work is modelled from the food systems dialogues currently occurring at an international level, led by David Nabarro, Chair of Global Health: <https://summitdialogues.org/>

The potential for a regional food network has grown out of a ten year RPH work programme to achieve healthy food environments across our region and make 'the healthy choice the easy choice' <http://www.rph.org.nz/public-health-topics/nutrition/research-papers/>. This programme of work includes the:

- development and on-going support of the Fruit and Vege Co-ops across Wellington
- Healthy Food and Drink Policy's (implemented in the 3DHB's and UHCC)

The latter led to an invitation to share this work and journey with the Mayoral Forum and to explore opportunities for regional collaboration on the local food environment. In discussion with the Forum, RPH was asked to explore the development of a regional food network. To determine if such a network was relevant to community food providers across the region we spoke with a number of community organisations to gauge interest in participating. This included food recovery, urban farming, council and social providers, the response was overwhelmingly positive.

RPH and CUPA co-hosted a series of four hui across the region over the past nine months (Lower Hutt, Porirua, Featherston and Kapiti) to hear the voices of all those involved in the food space.

125 participants attended these hui, representing 75 organisations including councils, food banks, food rescue, government departments, community centres, local growers, urban farmers, co-ops, hospitality, researchers, Iwi, Māori Wardens, community mobilisers and those teaching food knowledge and skills (e.g. cooking, preserving, budgeting), primary health organisations, faith communities, advocacy groups and philanthropic trusts, environmental event organisers, community events organisers and sustainability organisations.

Key themes arising from the four hui's included:

- 1) A recognition of how fragile our current linear food system is, requiring handouts and dependency for those who can't afford to participate;
- 2) The need to begin a movement to develop a circular food system/economy which is participatory and 'walking with' vulnerable people and communities;
- 3) Importance of including those most affected and co-designing for change from the top down and the bottom up.
- 4) A recognition for our region of the important potential role local food production and soil preservation could play in climate change responsibilities and mitigation.
- 5) A deep desire and commitment to work together in solidarity
- 6) The crucial role indigenous models of sovereignty have in the future of food.

We circulated the links to the WRGF documents to the regional food network (Kai and Community – draft name). This submission is a collation of the contributions from the network.

While we have written this as a stand-alone submission, we have aimed to align our feedback with your submission template. To honour our joint kaupapa the submission is a collation of contributions from a number of authors in their own words. However, it reflects the sentiments of the group as a whole.

Do you agree with the general direction of the draft Wellington Regional Growth Framework (the Framework)?

We are excited by the integrated approach to urban development and infrastructure planning in our region. On behalf of many individuals, groups and agencies that are uniting to create a food system that is good for people, prosperity and planet – we are encouraged that you have included the following as a key initiative:

- *Develop a regional strategy for food production to ensure food security and efficient supply chains and to include an emphasis on employment opportunities.*

What aspects of the Framework do you support?

We appreciate that the plan is conscious of the balance between quality urban environments within the current urban footprint and improving resilience and protecting the natural environment.

Since the early planning of the WRGF we have been impacted by the global COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic and its continuing impact both highlighted and exacerbated pre-existing issues including:

- Imbalance in our ecosystem between urbanisation and the natural environment
- Inequity in our society
- Food insecurity

What would you like more focus on in the Framework?

Collaboration is working for our community and has seen a number of successful initiatives unfold: We've worked together to create community composting hubs, an urban farming course for high school students, a food growing and composting webinar series and responded locally to local needs.

Our collaboration has received financial support to work together with our community to co-create a vision for local food in Wellington City. This has allowed us to take a multi-disciplinary approach and form a team that brings together frontline knowledge of urban agriculture alongside the tools of speculative and transition design. We're in the design phase of this work and we're keen to align with other related national, regional and local initiatives.

We believe that food resilience can be cultivated by a network of dedicated urban agriculture enthusiasts working together with the support of Wellington City Council to build up the capacity of community-led and local/neighbourhood scale food growing, sharing, and processing. To this end we are working to map the existing network of stakeholders, identify what is missing, and build a community from which collaborative action can flow. Through kotahitanga or unity, we are able to use system-led strategy to avoid duplicating work.

We would also like to take this opportunity to highlight the incredible mahi undertaken by Tim Packer from Innermost Gardens in collaboration with Victoria University. The Village Green project is a great example of what is working for our community - you can access it here: <https://green-kpis.youdo.io/craft-your-story/> - it shows what can be achieved in community-level food growing projects and community-driven research. The end result is an incredible impact-focused resource that empowers better capture and communication of the value of gardens in our neighbourhoods.

Achieving food resilience will take no less than a region-wide commitment to restoring and maintaining our connection with Papatūānuku. Deepening our connections with whole food through whakakapa, knowing the origins of where our food came from enhances our relationship with food. To this end councils must remain open to decolonising methodologies that invite citizens of Te-Whanganui-a-Tara to act as kaitiaki of the whenua. Kaitiakitanga is an outworking of the te ao Māori concept of Utu, or reciprocity, through which we are encouraged to nourish our surroundings as they in turn nourish us. An example of this in action can be seen in the grassroots civic action of Activist Gardening. We strongly encourage Councils to build a relationship with grassroots community activists and to work in partnership with those who are willing to put in the mahi to transform our urban environments. We simultaneously caution against an over-formalisation of this support.

We also strongly encourage Councils to support initiatives within city and surrounds that are doing public facing work. To celebrate people who are already growers by providing spaces, practical resources, and funding as requested. To support individuals, groups and organisations providing community education opportunities and those who are creating businesses to support this Local Food kaupapa, as it is important that there are multiple entry points for people on their food journey. Food resilience will be achieved when everyone in the broader Wellington region (including Horowhenua) can understand and adapt to lives in harmony with the natural environment by growing and eating foods that follow the flow of nature and are empowered to participate in Food Sovereignty as an outworking of reciprocity and stewardship.

The regional growth framework must centre indigenous knowledge and give decision making power to mana whenua that allows mana whenua to manage their resources.

We remind Local Government that as treaty partners under Article one of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, their duty and responsibility to protect the Maori pursuit of their rights to their taonga which includes ngā hua Māori.

Alongside this, the strategy must embrace the voices and hopes of youth, taking seriously their futures as inextricable from the future of our cities.

Its direction should be collaborative and holistic in its approach, taking into account all parts of the system and looking to minimise perpetuation of inequality by consulting those most negatively impacted by the current system, by addressing the drivers of inequality and access.

We believe that there is power in invitation, and that active participation of locals, creatives, artists and activists can weave together a system that sustainably grows our urban agriculture, providing a site for us to find, tend to, and build off and on common ground. It is vital to the social well-being of all generations faced with relentless caution of environmental collapse that avenues for tangible participation in the restoration of the world are made accessible. Our strategy should be inclusive, reflect our community, and build on its strengths.

As such we encourage councils to support the development of a Regional Food Network, as a vehicle to develop the regional food strategy as it involves citizens engaged in the growth of local food production, food security, efficient supply chains, and employment opportunities aligned with positive environmental impact.

Fixing an issue of food poverty with short term “fill a belly” strategies, whilst necessary ‘in the now’ will never create a sustainable system of food security, and may also contribute to societal problems such as obesity and climate change. We have a longer term view, giving our students the skills and the context to take action for their futures.

At the heart of this is community, sharing within communities. Our thriving programmes include connecting with community volunteers, who work alongside tamariki to share and learn new skills. Two of our Wellington schools have joined the WCC Seeds to Feeds initiative, to connect their programme to an organised community movement. This is just one way that Garden to Table builds community.

We believe that nourishing food, produced from healthy soil, makes for healthy people which in turn makes for a healthy planet, and we help teachers convey this to students in multiple ways. We make vegetables tasty, giving children an opportunity to change their palates to enjoy more nourishing food, as well as the skills to prepare that food. We teach them how all food comes from the soil, and so nourishing and nurturing the soil is crucial to creating nutrient-dense and tasty vegetables.

By empowering tamariki with the skills to make change, we are creating not just a knowledge base for the future, where our students will be seeking out food locally grown in environmentally sustainable ways, but also a generation of people who know better and will demand more. We would love for these students to find a world where sustainable and regenerative environmental practices have been embedded into policy, where food security was not something one had to seek out but was the norm and where their skills were recognised as being valuable to communities.

We propose that:

- ❖ That food system be prioritised in the Framework document along with focused resource to develop a regional strategy and support implementation. The 'Kai and Our Community' network offers support to develop the regional food strategy and seeks to align its development with efforts already taking place regionally.

For example:

- Help to legitimise local food resilience work and jobs as a career path for school-leavers and professionals by listening to requests for what's needed to make that happen and providing practical support and resources as needed.
 - Help with access to sites and land including buildings, sheds, space, tools, compost for local food initiatives.
 - Encourage and accommodate the inclusion of food growing and living architecture in designs for new builds in the central city and suburbs, as well as modifications to existing buildings. Engineers reports, incentives, etc. Help to make this easier and possible.
 - Support the continuation of the conversation by providing access to WCC's creative departments - Graphic designers, Film makers, Copywriters, etc. Help us to tell our stories in partnership with local projects and initiatives.
 - Provide facilities free of charge for networking events within this kaupapa.
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- ❖ The Framework recognise and acknowledge how a balanced food system contributes to the vision, objectives and initiatives identified in the draft document. For example:

Food sovereignty and the vital relationship to the whenua is core to Māori wellbeing.

More liveable; equitable access; living more locally with more jobs and services located within walking and cycling distance of our homes; Creating more employment opportunities towns closer to where many people live.

A more localised food production system will create and grow social enterprises, businesses and jobs. It will also reduce citizens' motorised travel to access affordable, healthy and appropriate food.

Climate change; resilient and greener region; resilience to natural hazards; reduce greenhouse gas emissions; Zero-carbon economy; circular economy:

A more natural food system is also good for the planet. With supply chains affected globally from the pandemic, the need for strengthened local food systems and resilience is more important than ever¹. Our diets are not just hurting our health but also the ecosystem that supports human life. Food is among the largest drivers of global environmental change contributing to climate change, biodiversity loss, freshwater use, interference with the global nitrogen and phosphorus cycles, and land-system change. Research shows that, without substantial changes, greenhouse gas emissions from the food sector will increase by 38% by 2050².

¹ Learning from our food system during Covid-19. SPIRA.

<https://www.spira.New Zealand/spira-blog/2020/4/28/learning-from-our-food-system-during-covid-19?fbclid=IwAR3Ym4Q9jzi7J27-oawG9v3BSiUuf1PaesRmtKPMaU6mz9BZ8JBvBmJYpVc>

² Good Food Cities: Achieving a Planetary Health Diet for All. C40Cities. <https://www.c40.org/other/good-food-cities>

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