



PLANNING A RESILIENT FOOD SYSTEM FOR VICTORIA

A Foodprint Melbourne Report
April 2024



Funder

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Right: Image Foodprint Melbourne



Executive summary



PLENTY VALLEY PRODUCE		All organic	
Mixed leaves	\$28/kg	Pumpkin	\$6/kg
Rocket		Shishito	\$5 tray
Spinach	\$4	Padron	
Lettuce	\$5	Jalapeno	\$4
Chard	\$5	Radish	\$4
Leeks	\$4	Tropea onion	\$5 bag
Spring onions	\$5	Sugar snap peas	\$35/kg
Carrots	\$4/3 for \$10	Golden butter beans	\$20/kg
Basil		Tomatoes macedonian	\$15/kg
Parsley	\$3/kg	Cherry tomatoes	\$15/kg
Zucchini	\$8/kg	TOMATO SPECIAL	
Cucumber	\$8/kg	1KG BAG FOR \$12	
Beetroot	\$10/kg	ASK about our Sauting	
Eggplant		Special 10KG boxes	

This report discusses the emerging field of food resilience planning, which focuses on taking actions to strengthen the resilience of food systems, and its relevance for the state of Victoria. The main findings of this research include:

- A **'food systems' approach is needed** to food resilience planning, but there is a lack of understanding among stakeholders about what a food systems approach is and how to implement it
- Examples of good practice in food resilience planning highlight the importance of **establishing effective governance**, conducting food resilience assessments and developing action plans
- The **responsibilities and accountabilities** for ensuring food security and planning resilient food systems **are unclear** at all levels of government in Australia. This lack of clarity undermines effective action to address food insecurity and to strengthen the resilience of food systems to shocks and stresses
- Government responsibilities and accountabilities for food security and food resilience planning should be integrated into relevant policy and legislative frameworks, adopting a **'whole of government' approach**
- Australia has obligations under international agreements to ensure that citizens are able to realise their **human right to food**, but there is no clear government responsibility for implementing the human right to food and no mechanisms to hold government to account
- The main approach to addressing food insecurity in Victoria, **emergency food relief**, does not adequately fulfil obligations related to the human right to food
- The right to adequate food should be included in a **national Human Rights Act** as part of the 'right to an adequate standard of living'
- The right to food should be incorporated into **Victoria's Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities** as part of the 'right to an adequate standard of living'
- **'Food with dignity'** approaches should be implemented to address food insecurity, such as social supermarkets, community-based markets, voucher schemes and the 'right to grow'
- **Toolkits are emerging** to support stakeholders in food resilience planning, including step-by-step process tools, conceptual frameworks and audit tools
- User-friendly tools and evaluation frameworks are needed for food resilience planning **at local and regional scale**
- Victorian stakeholders need **tools and guidance** that (i) help to make the case for food resilience planning (ii) build understanding of how to implement a 'food systems' approach to food resilience planning (iii) measure food system resilience and progress in strengthening resilience
- **Research gaps** in food resilience planning include gaps in evidence-based theoretical frameworks, food system frameworks for food resilience planning and 'whole of government' approaches to policy and governance for food resilience planning
- **Research gaps** in relation to food security include a need for more research into 'food with dignity' approaches to address food insecurity in Victoria

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SECTION 1

Introduction

\$5



1.1 Acknowledgement

We begin this report by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the unceded lands of Victoria. We pay our respects to the Traditional Owners of these lands and their Elders, and we acknowledge their careful management of these lands over tens of thousands of years. The First Peoples of this region have produced food on these lands for millennia, taking only what was needed and caring for Country. We recognise the importance of their knowledge and practices in food production and land management for a resilient and sustainable food system for the region.

1.2 About this report

This report discusses findings from the *Victorian food resilience planning project*. It focuses on how the state of Victoria (in southeast Australia) can undertake food resilience planning; that is, take actions to strengthen the resilience of the state's food system to shocks and stresses, including those related to climate change, pandemic or geopolitical conflict. Increasing shocks to food systems are leading to rising food prices and growing food insecurity.¹ As such, this report also has a significant focus on the governance of food security in Victoria.

The intended audience for this report is policymakers and other food system stakeholders. The report aims to build the capacity of policymakers and other stakeholders to undertake food resilience planning in Victoria. It identifies:

- the needs of Victorian stakeholders for tools and guidance to support food resilience planning
- key concepts and approaches in the emerging field of food resilience planning
- best practice approaches in food resilience planning, including case studies from Australia and other countries
- gaps in the governance of food resilience planning and food security in Victoria
- a human rights framework for addressing food insecurity in Victoria
- existing tools that can support stakeholders in undertaking food resilience planning

The report discusses a food systems approach to food resilience planning, which focuses on taking actions to strengthen resilience throughout food supply chains, from production to consumption and reuse of waste. A food systems approach emphasises integrated 'whole of government' approaches to addressing the resilience of food systems and food security.²

1 Murphy, M., Carey, R., and Alexandra, L. (2023) Building the resilience of agri-food systems to compounding shocks and stresses: A case study from Melbourne, Australia. *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems* 7. doi:10.3389/fsufs.2023.1130978.

2 Candel, J. and Pereira, L. (2017) Towards integrated food policy: Main challenges and steps ahead. *Environmental Science and Policy* 73: 89-92.

1.3 About the Victorian food resilience planning project

The *Victorian food resilience planning project* is based in the School of Agriculture, Food and Ecosystem Sciences (SAFES) in the Faculty of Science at the University of Melbourne. The project is funded by Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation and involves a range of project partners.³

The Victorian food resilience planning project aims to provide evidence and guidance for policymakers and other stakeholders about how to take action to build the resilience of Victoria's food system to shocks and stresses. The project team is collaborating with policymakers and other stakeholders to co-develop a 'how to guide' in food resilience planning, which will be released in 2025.

The Victorian food resilience planning project is the fourth phase of the Foodprint Melbourne research program, which began in 2015.⁴ All phases of the project have been funded by Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation.

This project extends previous work on the resilience of Melbourne's food system to the state of Victoria. It is grounded in the evidence base and policy roadmaps developed in previous phases of the project. It builds on a recommendation in the report *Building the resilience of Melbourne's food system – a roadmap*⁵ for all levels of government to undertake food resilience planning. This phase of the project investigates 'how to' undertake food resilience planning.



Image: Foodprint Melbourne

- 3 The project partners are City of Greater Bendigo, City of Melbourne, City of Whittlesea, Community Information and Support Victoria (CISVic), Foodbank Victoria, Merri-bek City Council, Mornington Peninsula Shire, North East Local Food Strategy Action Group, Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), Once Upon Tomorrow, Open Food Network, Vic-Health, Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS) and Wyndham City.
- 4 For more information about the previous phases of this project and project reports, briefings and infographics see <https://science.unimelb.edu.au/foodprint-melbourne>.
- 5 Carey, R., Murphy, M., Alexandra, L., Sheridan, J., Larsen, K. and McGill, E. (2022) Building the resilience of Melbourne's food system – a roadmap. University of Melbourne, Australia. <https://doi.org/10.46580/124371>.

1.4 Our approach

The findings presented in this report are based on:

- i a desktop review of policies and governance mechanisms that influence food resilience planning and food security in Victoria
- ii a scoping review to identify existing food resilience planning tools and guidance
- iii stakeholder interviews to identify the needs of Victorian stakeholders for guidance and tools to support food resilience planning, and to identify policy opportunities and barriers to strengthen food system resilience
- iv case studies of international and Australian best practice in food resilience planning

The desktop review examined federal, state and local government policies and governance mechanisms that influence the resilience of food systems and food security. The review focused particularly on Victorian policy and legislative frameworks. This included analysis of policy documents, legislation, submissions to and reports from government inquiries, media releases and the websites of government departments.

A scoping review was undertaken of the international literature to identify existing tools and guidance for planning resilient food systems. We searched academic and grey literature in the Web of Science, Scopus, CINAHL, AGRICOLA and CAB online databases. After removal of duplicates and screening, 26 papers on food resilience planning tools were selected. These tools were ranked for utility and ease of use, and seven tools were chosen to feature in this report (see section 4.3).

Interviews were conducted with 26 participants from state and local government, industry and civil society groups between September 2023 and February 2024. Interviews lasted around 50 minutes on average and were recorded with the consent of interviewees. Approval to conduct the research was received from the University of Melbourne's Human Research Ethics Committee.

Case studies of international and Australian best practice are based on desktop review of relevant documents and include Austin (USA), United Kingdom, and Queenstown, Wellington and Christchurch (New Zealand). Australian case studies focus on initiatives across Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia.

This research is embedded in the 'city region food system' (CRFS) approach developed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), which focuses on strengthening linkages between cities and areas of food production in their hinterlands to improve the resilience of food systems.⁶ It adopts an integrated 'food systems' approach, which focuses on actions that can be taken to strengthen resilience throughout the whole food system from food production, processing and distribution to retail, consumption and reuse of waste.⁷

Right: Image Foodprint Melbourne

6 FAO (2024) City Region Food Systems Programme. *The CRFS approach*. Available: <https://www.fao.org/in-action/food-for-cities-programme/overview/crfs/en/> (accessed 26 March 2024).

7 HLPE (2020) Food security and nutrition: *Building a global narrative towards 2030*. A report by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security, Rome.

SECTION 2

Food resilience planning



2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the emerging field of food resilience planning – key concepts and approaches, and developments in good practice internationally and in Australia. It examines the policy frameworks that influence the resilience of Victoria’s food system to shocks and stresses, and it makes the case for a ‘whole of government’ policy approach to strengthen the resilience of the state’s food system.

2.2 Food system resilience

Global food systems are being affected by more frequent and severe shocks that are disrupting food supply chains. These shocks are related to climate change (e.g. floods, fire and storms), pandemic and geopolitical conflicts.⁸ In addition to sudden shocks, global food systems are under pressure from longer-term stresses, such as rising temperatures, water stress, biodiversity loss, land degradation and high levels of food waste.⁹ Global food systems are also drivers of these shocks and stresses through their contribution to GHG emissions, over-extraction of water from river and aquifer systems, and their impacts on land use change and biodiversity loss.¹⁰

Food system shocks contribute to rising food prices and food insecurity

Victoria is already being affected by the impacts of climate change. The state has warmed by around 1.0 degrees Celsius since official records began. It is likely to face more flooding, more droughts and more high fire danger days in future.¹¹ Climate events and other shocks have impacts throughout food systems, and they are contributing to rising food prices and increasing food insecurity in Victoria and elsewhere in the world.¹² Sudden shocks and chronic stresses often co-occur (for example, bushfires and floods during the COVID-19 pandemic), leading to compounding impacts.¹³

There is a growing focus on strengthening the *resilience* of food systems to shocks and stresses. Resilience is an emerging concept in relation to food systems, and people define it in different ways. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations defines resilience as¹⁴:

“The capacity over time of agrifood systems, in the face of any disruption, to sustainably ensure availability of and access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food for all, and sustain the livelihoods of agrifood systems’ actors.”

If a food system is resilient, it can continue to deliver an adequate supply of nutritious and culturally acceptable food to everyone, even during shocks to the system. Resilient food systems also have the capacity to adapt and transform in response to changing circumstances, building longer term resilience to future shocks and stresses.¹⁵

8 FAO (2021) *The state of food and agriculture 2021. Making agrifood systems more resilient to shocks and stresses*. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

9 FAO (2021a) *The state of the world’s land and water resources for food and agriculture: Systems at breaking point. Synthesis report 2021*. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

10 Parlasca, M. and Qaim, M. (2022) Meat consumption and sustainability. *Annual Review of Resource Economics* 14: 17-41.

11 DELWP (2019) *Victoria’s climate science: Report 2019*. Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning. Victorian Government.

12 Murphy, M., Carey, R., and Alexandra, L. (2022) *The resilience of Melbourne’s food system to climate and pandemic shocks*. University of Melbourne, Australia. <https://doi.org/10.46580/124370>.

13 Quigley, M., Attanayake, J., King, A., and Prideaux, F. (2020) A multi-hazards earth science perspective on the COVID-19 pandemic: the potential for concurrent and cascading crises. *Environment Systems and Decisions* 40: 199-215.

14 FAO (2021) As above, p6.

15 Murphy, M. et al. (2022) As above.

What is a food system?

A food system includes all the actors and activities involved in producing, processing, distributing, retailing, consuming and disposing of food, and the interactions between them. It also includes the infrastructure, natural resources and other inputs that support those activities, and their outputs.¹⁶

2.3 Food resilience planning

Food resilience planning is an emerging field of practice, which involves taking actions to build the resilience of food systems.¹⁷ Food systems exist at different scales – global, national, regional and local – and food resilience planning can also be carried out at different scales. Food resilience planning involves taking actions across all stages of food supply chains from food production to consumption and recycling of waste.

Food resilience planning can be carried out by governments with other stakeholders and may involve the development of food resilience plans or strategies (see section 2.6). The actions of many government departments affect the resilience of food systems, and food resilience planning requires a ‘whole of government’ approach (see section 2.7). Food resilience planning may also be carried out by other food system stakeholders and typically involves stakeholders from across multiple sectors.

Food resilience planning is related to the field of *food systems planning*.¹⁸ Food systems planning sits at the intersection of food systems, urban planning and related disciplines (such as community planning, regional planning and infrastructure planning). It focuses on taking actions to achieve social, environmental and economic goals related to food systems and it may involve people across a range of sectors, such as public health, environmental sustainability, waste management, water management and agriculture. Food resilience planning is a similarly multi-disciplinary and multi-sector endeavour, with a particular focus on strengthening food system resilience to shocks and stresses.

As food resilience planning is an emerging field, the concepts are not yet well understood. Interviewees in our research highlighted the need for clear and easily understood concepts to guide food resilience planning.

One of the problems across the board is when you talk about food system resilience it would depend on who you talk about as to how they would define that system.... I don't think we're clear on what we really mean by resilient. – Interview 10, Government

Food systems resilience planning, I think, is potentially a hard one for communities and people to connect with. – Interview 7, Government

Food resilience planning involves taking actions to strengthen the resilience of food systems to shocks and stresses

16 Draws on a definition in HLPE (2020) *Food security and nutrition: building a global narrative towards 2030*. A report by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security, Rome.

17 John Hopkins Centre for a Liveable Future refers to ‘food system resilience planning’ in their 2023 report ‘Food system resilience: A planning guide for local governments’. While they don’t define ‘food system resilience planning’, their report focuses on actions that can be taken by local governments to build the resilience of local food systems.

18 Vitello, D. and Brinkley, C. (2014) The hidden history of food system planning. *Journal of Planning History* 13 (2): 91-112.

Making our food systems more resilient

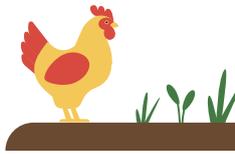
Taking action across local food systems

Make it easier to buy food from local farmers

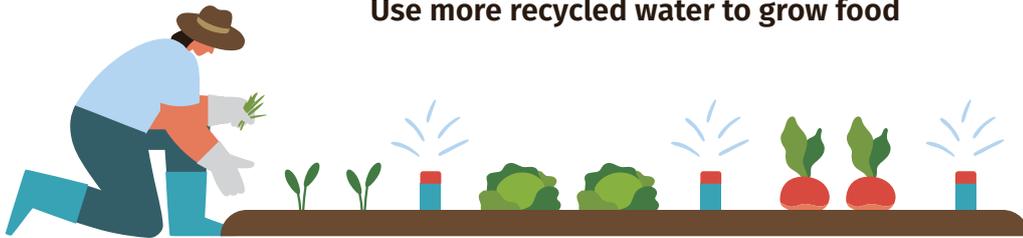
FARMGATE SHOP



Protect farmland to grow food close to towns and cities



Use more recycled water to grow food



Grow a wide variety of foods

Prevent food waste to lower GHG emissions



Ensure that everyone can access healthy food in dignified ways

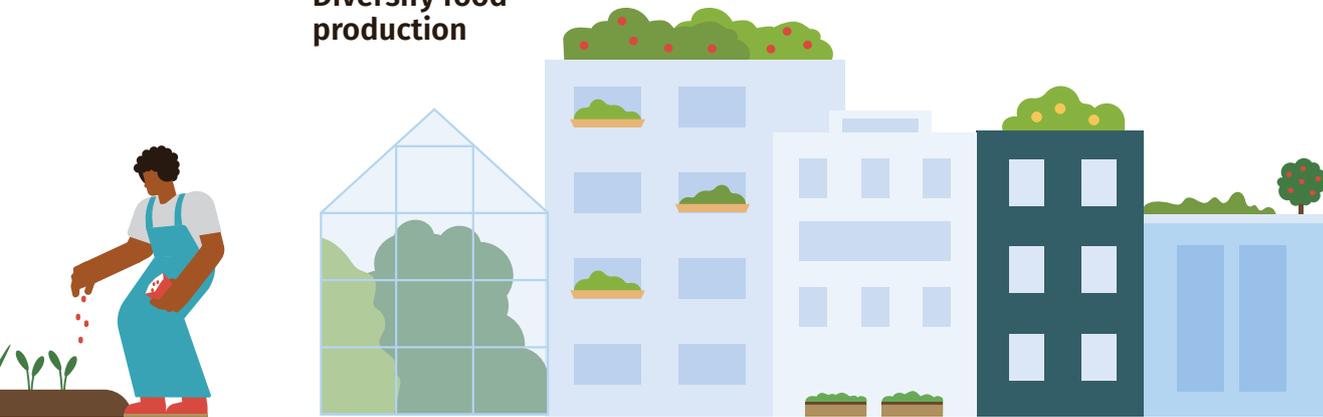


Plan for diverse food stores

Fund and support First Peoples' food initiatives

Set up community-based markets, stores and cafes

Diversify food production



Grow more food in neighbourhoods



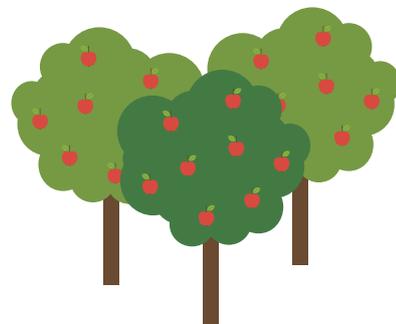
Collaborate in a food resilience network



Invest in infrastructure for local food processing and distribution



Map community food assets



Create an action plan to make your community food system resilient

Plant community gardens and orchards

2.4 Frameworks for food resilience planning

As a new field, food resilience planning lacks comprehensive theoretical frameworks to guide practice. However, conceptual frameworks have been developed for aspects of food system resilience that can be helpful in food resilience planning. There are frameworks for considering the focus (or scope) of resilience building activity, the aims of strengthening food system resilience and for assessing food system resilience.

Four framing questions

Researchers have identified four key questions that are useful to ask when thinking about the scope of resilience building activities for food systems.^{19,20}

1 Resilience of what?

Where are you trying to increase resilience? For example, are you aiming to build the resilience of the food system overall (national, regional or local)? Are you concerned about interactions between food systems and other systems (e.g. energy or communications)? Or are you trying to build resilience in part of the food system (e.g. on farms, or in households)?

Food resilience planning is a new field

2 Resilience to what?

What are you trying to build resilience against? What shocks and stresses are likely to affect the food system and how are they likely to interact? Are you focusing only on sudden shocks or also considering longer term stresses?

3 Resilience for whom?

Who will benefit from increasing resilience? Are there trade-offs for different actors in the food system that you need to consider (e.g. for consumers and farmers)? How can you bring an equity or justice lens to your work?

4 Resilience for how long?

Over what time period are you aiming to build resilience? Are you focusing on resilience to short term disruptions or building the long-term resilience of the food system?

Aims of resilience building

Resilience building can have different aims, which may be associated with different actions. Aims for building the resilience of food systems can be considered within the 'Three R's' framework.^{21,22} The three R's are all types of adaptation – robustness, recovery and reorientation.

Robustness as an aim focuses on adapting activities to withstand a disruption (i.e. maintaining the status quo). An example would be installing water tanks in a community garden to withstand drought.

Recovery focuses on the ability of food system actors to return to a desired state after a disruption (i.e. to bounce back). An example would be for a supermarket to restore power quickly after a power outage during a storm.

Reorientation involves accepting a change in the outcomes of the system, so that the system is transformed in some way to make it less vulnerable to future shocks and stresses. As an example, it might involve a change to a completely different type of production system.

19 Zurek, M., Ingram, J., Sanderson Bellam, A., Goold, C., Lyon, C., Alexander, P., Barnes, A., Bebbler, D., Breeze, T., Bruce, A., Collins, L., Davies, J., Doherty, B., Ensor, J., Franco, S., Gatto, A., Hess, T., Lamprinopoulou, C., Liu, L., Merkle, M., Norton, L., Oliver, T., Ollerton, J., Potts, S., Reed, M., Sutcliffe, C. and Withers, P. (2022) Food system resilience: Concepts, issues and challenges. *Annual Review of Environment and Resources* 47: 511-34.

20 Food Systems Transformation Group (2022) *Enhancing the resilience of London's food system*. Environmental Change Institute, University of Oxford.

21 Zurek, M. et al. (2022) As above.

22 Food Systems Transformation Group (2022) As above.

Assessing food system resilience

Assessing food system resilience is a common first step in food resilience planning initiatives (see case studies in section 2.5). Resilience can be assessed at national, regional, community or household level, and the indicators used in assessments tend to cover multiple different types of capital, including natural, human, social, financial and manufactured.²³ A general framework has been proposed for assessing food system resilience that involves (i) mapping food system actors, assets and their resilience capacities, and (ii) assessing resilience outcomes in terms of the food security of the local population.²⁴

Assessing food system resilience is a common first step in food resilience planning

2.5 Food resilience planning in practice

The focus on food resilience planning has increased in the last 5 – 10 years as food systems have been affected by shocks related to climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical events, such as Russia's invasion of Ukraine.²⁵ Food resilience planning is taking place globally and in Australia, and it is being undertaken at multiple scales – national, regional and local.

International food resilience planning

Several food resilience assessments have been undertaken in North America since 2020 at national and city level. The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) carried out an assessment of the resilience of national agrifood supply chains, identifying vulnerabilities related to highly concentrated supply chains, labour shortages, transport bottlenecks, climate and biosecurity risks.²⁶ Canada has also undertaken an assessment of the resilience of national supply chains, including food supply chains, with a particular focus on transportation and distribution.²⁷

A number of cities in North America have developed food resilience plans, including Boston, Baltimore and Toronto, while other cities in the region have established food resilience planning initiatives, including Austin (Texas) (see case study), Portland (Oregon)²⁸, Denver and Miami.²⁹ Many of these initiatives have their roots in concerns about the impacts of climate change on the resilience of city food systems. New Zealand has also been a focus of significant food resilience planning activity in cities over the last decade, with an emphasis on resilience to earthquakes and climate change (see case study).

Analysis of these food resilience planning initiatives in cities in North America and New Zealand reveals several common elements. These include mapping food system assets and actors in the region, followed by an assessment of the resilience of the region's food system to identify vulnerabilities to potential shocks. As initiatives progress, a food resilience plan or policy might be developed, which identifies strategies for addressing vulnerabilities and strengthening food system resilience. In some cities, community networks have also been established to strengthen food system resilience, such as the Christchurch Food Resilience Network³⁰ and the Queenstown Lakes Food Network in New Zealand's South Island.³¹

23 Ujjwal, K., Campbell-Ross, H., Godde, C., Friedman, R., Lim-Camacho, L., and Crimp, S. (2024) A systematic review of the evolution of food system resilience assessment. *Global Food Security* 40. Article 100744.

24 Bene, C., Frankenberger, T., Nelson, S., Constat, M., Collins, G., Langworthy, M. and Fox, K. (2023) Food system resilience measurement: principles, frameworks and caveats. *Food Security* 15: 1437-1458.

25 Keegan, S., Reis, K., Roiko, A., and Desha, C. (2023) Exploring resilience concepts and strategies within regional food systems: a systematic literature review. *Food Security*. doi:10.1007/s12571-023-01418-9.

26 USDA (2022) *USDA agri-food supply chain assessment: program and policy options for strengthening resilience*. US Department of Agriculture.

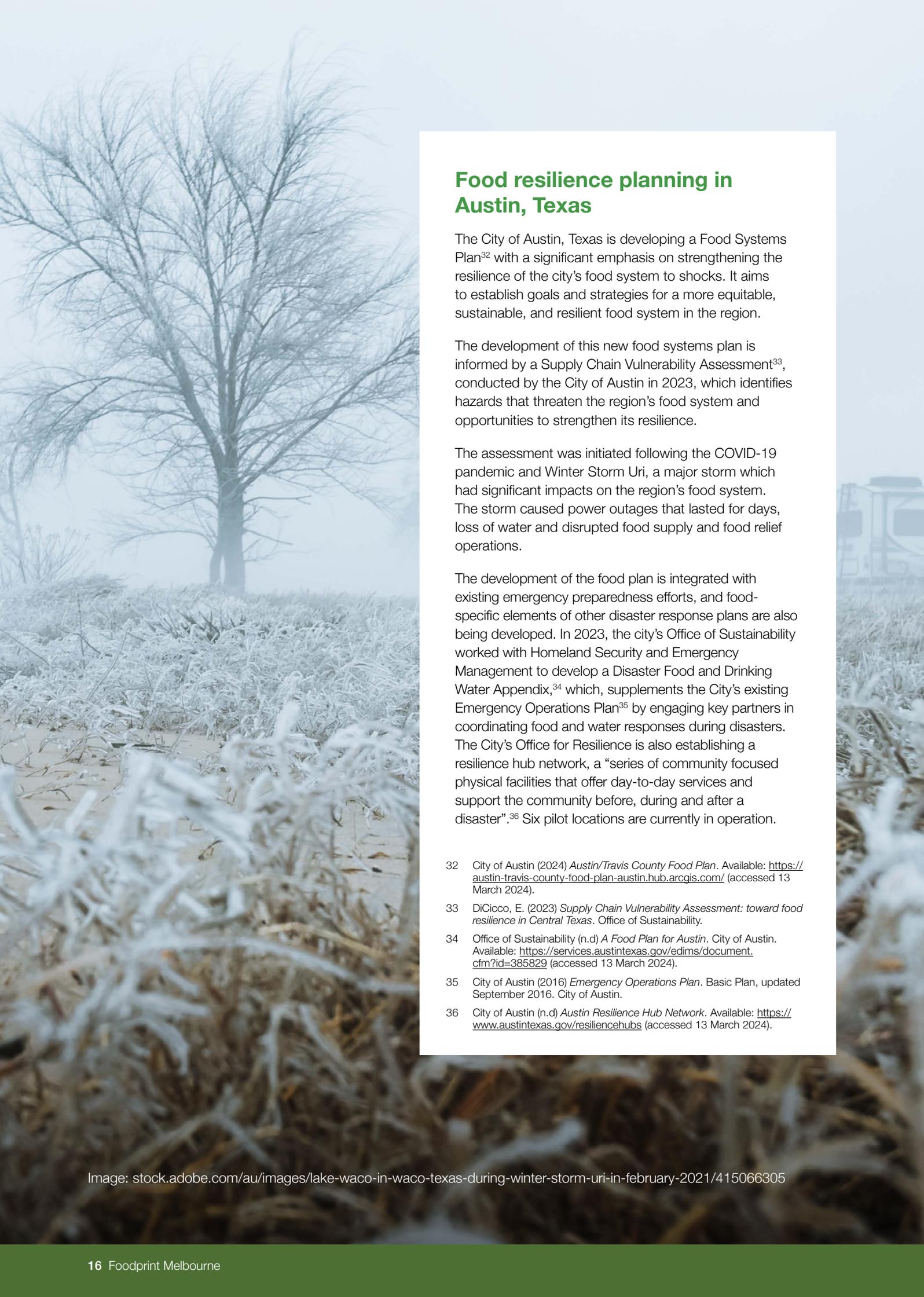
27 Government of Canada (2022) *Action, collaboration, transportation: Final report of the National Supply Chain Task Force 2022*. Government of Canada.

28 Zeuli, K. (2022) *RDPO Food system resilience scoping study*. January 2022. The Feeding Cities Group/Bridge Economic Development.

29 John Hopkins Centre for a Liveable Future (2022) *Food system resilience: a planning guide for local governments*. John Hopkins Centre for a Liveable Future.

30 Food Resilience Network (2014) *Food Resilience Network Action Plan*. Available: <https://www.ccc.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Environment/Sustainability/FoodResilienceActionPlan2014.pdf> (accessed 13 March 2024).

31 Queenstown Lakes District Council (2023) *Council Report: Climate and Biodiversity Plan Update*, 6 July 2023. Available: https://www.qldc.govt.nz/media/1dtnzde3/5-230622-af-r-report-climate-biodiversity-plan-update-sb-edits_jw-edits-clean.pdf (accessed 3 April 2024).



Food resilience planning in Austin, Texas

The City of Austin, Texas is developing a Food Systems Plan³² with a significant emphasis on strengthening the resilience of the city's food system to shocks. It aims to establish goals and strategies for a more equitable, sustainable, and resilient food system in the region.

The development of this new food systems plan is informed by a Supply Chain Vulnerability Assessment³³, conducted by the City of Austin in 2023, which identifies hazards that threaten the region's food system and opportunities to strengthen its resilience.

The assessment was initiated following the COVID-19 pandemic and Winter Storm Uri, a major storm which had significant impacts on the region's food system. The storm caused power outages that lasted for days, loss of water and disrupted food supply and food relief operations.

The development of the food plan is integrated with existing emergency preparedness efforts, and food-specific elements of other disaster response plans are also being developed. In 2023, the city's Office of Sustainability worked with Homeland Security and Emergency Management to develop a Disaster Food and Drinking Water Appendix,³⁴ which, supplements the City's existing Emergency Operations Plan³⁵ by engaging key partners in coordinating food and water responses during disasters. The City's Office for Resilience is also establishing a resilience hub network, a "series of community focused physical facilities that offer day-to-day services and support the community before, during and after a disaster".³⁶ Six pilot locations are currently in operation.

32 City of Austin (2024) *Austin/Travis County Food Plan*. Available: <https://austin-travis-county-food-plan-austin.hub.arcgis.com/> (accessed 13 March 2024).

33 DiCicco, E. (2023) *Supply Chain Vulnerability Assessment: toward food resilience in Central Texas*. Office of Sustainability.

34 Office of Sustainability (n.d) *A Food Plan for Austin*. City of Austin. Available: <https://services.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=385829> (accessed 13 March 2024).

35 City of Austin (2016) *Emergency Operations Plan*. Basic Plan, updated September 2016. City of Austin.

36 City of Austin (n.d) *Austin Resilience Hub Network*. Available: <https://www.austintexas.gov/resiliencehubs> (accessed 13 March 2024).

Food system resilience planning in Aotearoa New Zealand

Extreme weather events are increasing in frequency and severity in Aotearoa New Zealand and the country is also prone to earthquakes.³⁷ Local governments across the country are working to improve the resilience of their local food systems to climate and earthquake events, including Queenstown, Wellington and Christchurch.

Queenstown

Queenstown in New Zealand's South Island assessed the resilience of the Queenstown Lakes District in 2023.³⁸ The region relies on food produced outside the local area, and it is prone to earthquakes and landslides, which have the potential to cut off the region's food supply.

The food system resilience assessment identifies potential areas to increase production of local food based on maps of food assets in the region. The maps include information about regional climate, soil types, stakeholders, land use zones and foraging locations, as well as risks from potential hazards. The Queenstown Lakes Food Network was set up in 2022 to develop a vision for a resilient food system.³⁹

Wellington

Wellington City Council's Food Action Plan, *Te Anamata ā-Kai o Tō Tātou Tāone Our City's Food Future*⁴⁰ has a focus on building community resilience and responding effectively to emergencies, while fostering a climate-responsible food system. The City intends to develop an Emergency Food Provisions Plan, increase city composting infrastructure and support more climate-responsible food initiatives.

Wellington's Food Action Plan integrates First Nations priorities, aspirations and mātauranga (knowledge) for local food system action. The plan is underpinned by the Hua Parakore framework to amplify mana Motuhake (autonomy) and whanaungatanga (relationship(s)) for Māori soil and kai (food) sovereignty. It is overseen by the Connected Communities team at Wellington City Council and will be renewed every 3 years.

Christchurch

Christchurch is another example of strong food resilience planning in New Zealand. In response to catastrophic earthquakes in 2010 and 2011, a community Food Resilience Network formed in 2014, leading to the development of the Food Resilience Network Action Plan⁴¹ and Edible Canterbury Charter.⁴² Christchurch City Council also developed a Food Resilience Policy in 2014.⁴³ These initiatives aim to strengthen community partnerships, maintain food security and promote resilient food systems in the context of shocks and stresses.

37 Ministry for the Environment and Stats NZ (2023) *New Zealand's Environmental Reporting Series: Our atmosphere and climate 2023*. Ministry for the Environment and Stats NZ.

38 Wao (2023) *Queenstown Lakes District Food Resilience Report*. Wao Aotearoa.

39 Queenstown Lakes District Council (2023) As above.

40 Wellington City Council (2023) *Te Anamata ā-Kai o Tō Tātou Tāone Our City's Food Future*. Wellington City Council.

41 Food Resilience Network (2014) As above.

42 Food Resilience Network (2015) *Edible Canterbury Charter*. Available: https://www.dunedinnz.com/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/624213/Edible-Canterbury-Charter-2014.pdf (accessed 13 March 2024).

43 Christchurch City Council (2014) *Food Resilience Policy*. Available: <https://ccc.govt.nz/the-council/plans-strategies-policies-and-by-laws/policies/sustainability-policies/food-resilience-policy> (accessed 13 March 2024).

Food resilience planning in Australia

Food resilience planning initiatives have begun taking place at state, regional and city level in Australia in recent years. At state level, the Tasmanian Government has developed the *Food relief to food resilience action plan 2023–2025*, which focuses on delivery of sustainable and nutritious food relief, and which also includes funding for community gardens and a school lunch pilot program.⁴⁴ The Northern Rivers region of New South Wales, which was affected by significant flooding in 2017 and 2022, released an assessment of the resilience of its regional food system in 2023. Their report identified short-term and long-term actions to strengthen resilience across the food system.⁴⁵ In Victoria, a number of local governments include a focus on strengthening food system resilience in their food strategies (see Table 1), and many are implementing initiatives that promote community food production and supporting ‘food with dignity’ approaches to increasing food access (see section 3.7).

Table 1 Food system resilience in Victorian local government food strategies

Council	Policy	Policy extract
Banyule City Council	Urban Food Strategy 2023–2027 ⁴⁶	“The Strategy will be a key tool for building community resilience and connection in Banyule over the next decade” (p 7)
City of Melbourne	Draft Food Policy: Food City 2024–2034 ⁴⁷	This policy identifies “a sustainable and resilient food system” as one of its six priorities (p 18)
City of Greater Bendigo	Greater Bendigo’s Food Systems Strategy 2020–2030 ⁴⁸	“A sustainable food system that strengthens our local economy and builds the capacity and resilience of our communities” (p 5)
Cardinia Shire Council	Cardina Shire Community Food Strategy 2018–2026 ⁴⁹	“A sustainable food system strengthens our local economy and builds the capacity and resilience of our communities” (p 4)
Local council governments of Benalla, Indigo, Wodonga, Towong, Alpine, Wangaratta and Mansfield.	North East Local Food Strategy 2018–2022: Strengthening the local food system in North East Victoria ⁵⁰	“This Strategy has been developed in response to an identified need for a collaborative, cross-sector, approach to ensure a sustainable, resilient and equitable food system in North East Victoria” (p 2)
Merri-bek City Council	Moreland Food System Strategy Extension 2020–2024 ⁵¹	This policy includes a strategic objective on a “Healthy environment, resilient community” (p 2)
City of Darebin	Urban Food Production Strategy 2014–2018 ⁵²	“The development of the Urban Food Production Strategy provides the opportunity to recognise our community’s desire for a thriving and resilient local food system” (p 4)
Yarra City Council	Urban Agriculture Strategy 2019–2023 ⁵³	“Yarra contributes to a sustainable city where our community grows, produces and shares food as part of a healthy and resilient food system” (p 15)

44 Department of Premier and Cabinet (2023) *Food resilience action plan: 2023-2025*. March 2023. Tasmanian Government.

45 Berry, F., Keegan, S., Sadegh Koohestani, S., New, M., and Renouf, J. (2023) *Is the Northern Rivers food system resilient? Northern Rivers food security scoping study*. Plan C, UTS Institute for Sustainable Futures and Wild Community.

46 Banyule City Council (2023) *Urban Food Strategy 2023-2027*. Banyule City Council.

47 City of Melbourne (2023) *Draft Food Policy: Food City 2024-2034*. City of Melbourne.

48 City of Greater Bendigo (2020) *Greater Bendigo’s Food Systems Strategy 2020-2030*. City of Greater Bendigo.

49 Cardinia Shire Council (2019) *Cardina Shire Community Food Strategy 2018-2026*. Cardinia Shire Council

50 North East Local Food Strategy Working Group (2019) *North East Local Food Strategy 2018-2022: Strengthening the local food system in North East Victoria*. North East Local Food Strategy Working Group.

51 Merri-bek City Council (2020) *Moreland Food System Strategy Extension 2020-2024*. Merri-bek City Council.

52 City of Darebin (n.d) *Urban Food Production Strategy 2014-2018*. City of Darebin.

53 Yarra City Council (n.d) *Urban Agriculture Strategy 2019-2023*. Yarra City Council.

2.6 Policy context for food resilience planning in Victoria

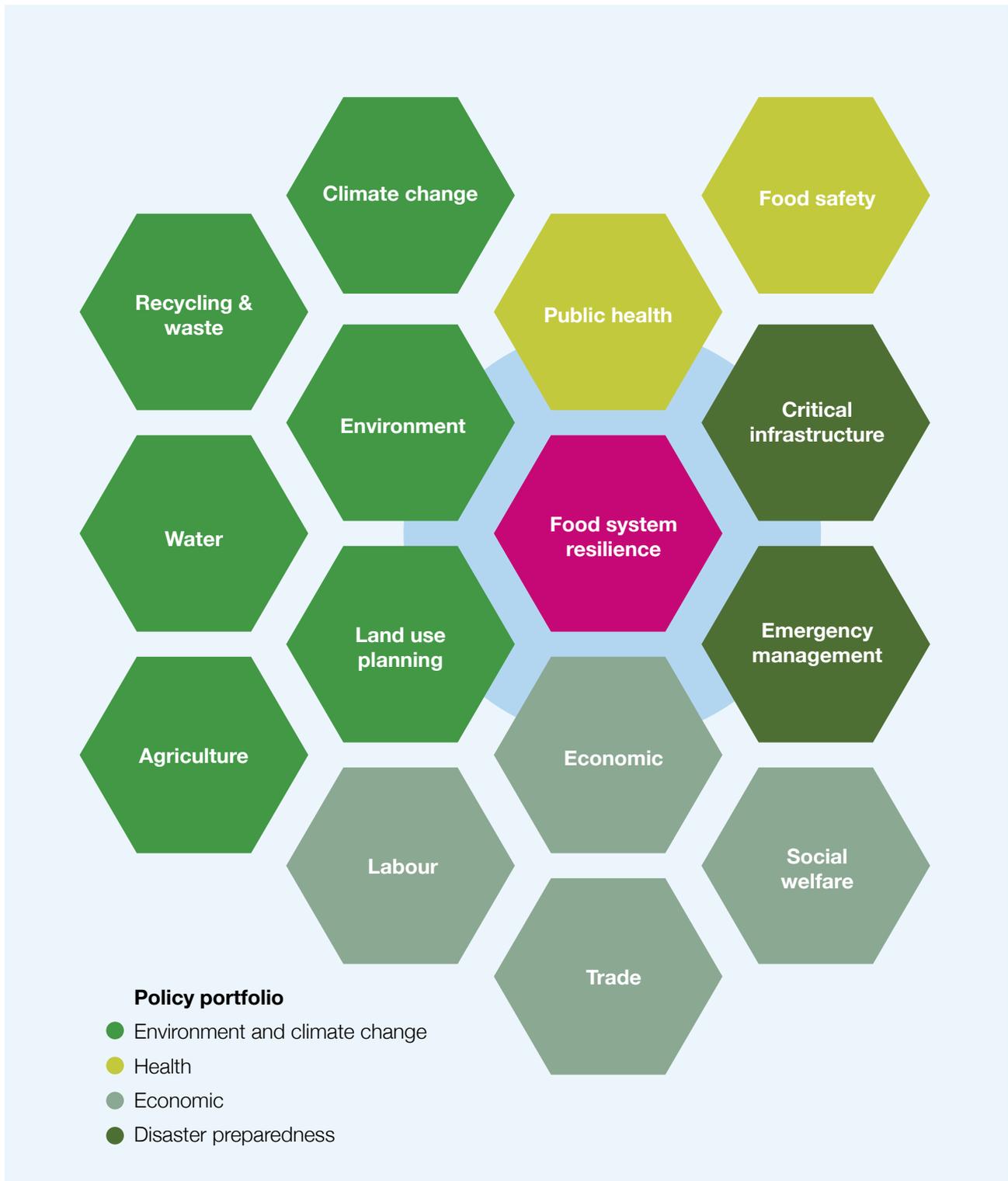
The resilience of Victoria's food system, and its capacity to maintain food security through shocks and stresses, are influenced by a wide range of policies and legislation across federal, state and local government. They include policies and legislation relating to the environment (including management of natural resources), climate change, public health, disaster preparedness, and the economy (see Figure 1).

If decisions in related policy portfolios are taken without regard to their impact on the resilience of the food system and food security, it can lead to adverse outcomes. For example, a decision in the land use planning portfolio to rezone areas of horticultural production for urban development could reduce supply of fresh fruit and vegetables, while a decision to increase water supply to urban areas could reduce the supply of water available for irrigated agriculture.



Image: stock.adobe.com/au/images/panoramic-image-of-a-plume-of-black-smoke-rising-at-sunset-from-a-line-of-wild-fire-in-the-distant-farmland-a-gravel-road-and-native-trees-in-the-foreground-rural-victoria-australia/542832862

Figure 1. Key policy portfolios that influence food system resilience⁵⁴



54 Adapted from Murphy, M., Carey, R., and Alexandra, L. (2022) *The resilience of Melbourne's food system to climate and pandemic shocks*. University of Melbourne, Australia. <https://doi.org/10.46580/124370>, p 48.

Environment and climate change

Food system resilience and food security in Victoria are significantly influenced by policy related to agriculture, management of natural resources (such as land and water), environmental sustainability, and climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Agriculture

The federal Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) provides the regulatory framework for agriculture and administers biosecurity, agricultural exports and food import legislation. At state level, the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) holds the portfolio for agriculture policy. There is a significant emphasis in both federal and state agriculture policy on increasing food production.⁵⁵ Victoria's agriculture strategy states⁵⁶:

“We will grow the value and output of agriculture through increased exports, investment, greater diversification and new products.”

The main policy focus, however, is on economic growth through food exports, and there is little focus the resilience of the domestic food supply.

I don't think we've got a map of what food is harvested when around Australia. So, when there's a flood across Victoria's food bowl - Shepparton, Echuca, and so on - what crops, whether they be vegetable or cereal, are being harvested at that time? – Interview 6, Industry

Food system resilience is influenced by many different policy portfolios

Water

Water policy has a significant impact on the resilience of agriculture in Victoria. Water availability for agriculture in the region is declining, due to population growth, the impacts of climate change and the need to restore environmental flows in major river basins.⁵⁷ The state government has the major responsibility for management of water resources⁵⁸, although the federal government has responsibilities for the management of water in the Murray-Darling Basin, Australia's major food bowl.⁵⁹ One of the main ways in which water policy can strengthen the resilience of food production, particularly in peri-urban areas, is by making more recycled water and treated stormwater available for food production.⁶⁰

55 DAWE (2022) *Delivering Ag2030*. Canberra: Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment.

56 Victorian Government (2020) *Strong, innovative, sustainable: A new strategy for agriculture in Victoria*. Melbourne: Victorian Government, p 12.

57 DELWP (2016) *Water for Victoria*. Melbourne: Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.

58 Carey, R., Sheridan, J. and Larsen, K. (2018) *Food for thought: Challenges and opportunities for farming in Melbourne's foodbowl*. University of Melbourne.

59 DCCEEW (2024) National partnership agreement on implementing water reform in the Murray-Darling Basin. Available: <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/water/policy/implementing-the-plan/npa-reports> (accessed 25 March 2024).

60 Carey, R., Murphy, M., Alexandra, L., Sheridan, J., Larsen, K. and McGill, E. (2022) *Building the resilience of Melbourne's food system – a roadmap*. A Foodprint Melbourne report. University of Melbourne.

Land use planning

Land use planning policy can influence food system resilience in many ways, including protecting agricultural land from urban development, making land available for urban agriculture, and encouraging diversity and decentralisation in food processing, retail and transport infrastructure. The *Planning and Environment Act 1987* establishes the legislative framework for land use planning in Victoria and sets out the Victoria Planning Provisions (VPP), which are applied by local governments in developing their municipal planning schemes. There are multiple provisions in the Act and in the VPP to protect agricultural land. However, agricultural land has continued to be lost to urban development around Melbourne and other regional cities in Victoria.⁶¹ The Victorian Government has proposed new measures to strengthen protection for agricultural land around Melbourne in the *Planning for Melbourne's Green Wedges and Agricultural Land Action Plan 2024*.⁶²

Protecting agricultural land is important for resilient food systems

Local governments have a role in protecting farmland through their municipal planning schemes. They also strengthen food system resilience by making public land available for community food production and food markets, promoting a diverse range of options for healthy food retail and by developing guidelines for street verge gardens that support food gardening.^{63,64}

Environment, recycling and waste

Waste policy plays an important role in strengthening the resilience of food systems through the prevention and recycling of food waste. Food waste undermines the natural resource base on which food production depends and generates methane (a powerful greenhouse gas) when sent to landfill.⁶⁵

The federal and state governments have targets to halve food waste in line with the relevant SDG target.^{66,67} The Victorian Government has a target to halve organic material going to landfill, and all local governments in the state must introduce a food and organics (FOGO) recovery service by 2030.⁶⁸ Many local governments have already introduced kerbside collection of food waste⁶⁹, and they are establishing food waste education programs to encourage households to reduce food waste.

Policies that promote regenerative and agroecological approaches to food production can also strengthen the resilience of food production. Intensive agricultural practices have degraded the land and water systems in Australia that underpin food production for current and future generations^{70,71}, and there are tensions between the policy focus on increasing agricultural productivity in Victoria and policy to promote resilient and sustainable food systems.

61 Carey, R. et al. (2018) As above.

62 Department of Transport and Planning (2024) *Planning for Melbourne's Green Wedges and Agricultural Land Action Plan 2024*. Melbourne: Victorian Government.

63 Carey, R. et al. (2018) As above.

64 Reeve, B., Carrad, A., Rose, N., Charlton, K. and Aguirre-Bielschowsky, I. (2021) As above.

65 FAO (2019) *The State of Food and Agriculture 2019. Moving forward on food loss and waste reduction*. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

66 Australian Government (2017) *National food waste strategy: Halving Australia's food waste by 2030*. Canberra: Australian Government.

67 Sustainability Victoria (2020) *The path to half*. Melbourne: Sustainability Victoria.

68 DELWP (2020) As above.

69 Premier of Victoria (2024) *New lease on life for food and organic waste*. Media release 28 February 2024. Melbourne: Victorian Government.

70 Creswell, I., Janke, T. and Johnston, E. (2021) *Australia state of the environment 2021: overview*. Independent report to the Australian Government Minister for the Environment, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

71 Lawrence, G., Richards, C. and Lyons, K. (2013) Food security in Australia in an era of neoliberalism, productivism and climate change. *Journal of Rural Studies* 29: 30-39.

Climate change

There is an increasing focus in federal and state government policy on adaptation to climate change, including resilience to extreme weather events and drought resilience.⁷² Climate change adaptation policies were introduced for multiple sectors in Victoria in 2022, including primary production, the built environment, transport and health and human services.⁷³ Federal and state government emissions reductions targets also influence food system resilience. The Australian Government legislated emissions reductions targets in 2022, and Net Zero plans are being developed for the Agriculture and land, Electricity and energy, and Transport and infrastructure sectors.⁷⁴ In 2023, Victoria set a net zero target for 2045.⁷⁵

Health

Health policy plays a critical role in promoting the resilience of food systems, from dietary guidelines to public health planning and food safety regulation. It includes long-term actions that influence food systems and short-term actions that protect against food-borne disease.

Public health

Public health legislation and policy plays a role in food resilience planning from primary production through to consumption and waste. The *Victorian public health and wellbeing plan 2023–2027*⁷⁶ identifies “healthy and more equitable, sustainable food systems across Victoria” as a priority, which provides a ‘policy hook’ that many local government and community organisations use to progress food resilience planning.

Many councils have been actively thinking about food, food production, food consumption, healthy food consumption in the context of their municipal health and wellbeing planning, particularly in councils where there’s perhaps more vulnerable communities...and those municipal level health and wellbeing plans then feeding up into the statewide public health and wellbeing plan. – Interview 2, Government

However, the main emphasis of federal and state policy is on increasing consumption of healthy foods and decreasing consumption of discretionary foods, rather than whether people have access to sufficient healthy sustainable food. There is also a focus on increasing availability of healthy food in public settings.⁷⁷ Both the federal and state governments provide some funding to the charitable sector for emergency food relief, and funding increased during the COVID-19 pandemic.⁷⁸ Local governments also provide support for food relief services⁷⁹ and some support ‘food with dignity’ initiatives, such as social supermarkets (see section 3.4). However, the responsibilities and accountabilities of all levels of government in relation to food access are unclear, which undermines food system resilience (see section 3.5).

The accountabilities of all levels of government for food access are unclear

72 E.g. DAFF (2023) *Adaptation and the agricultural sector*. Available: <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/agriculture-land/farm-food-drought/climatechange/adaptation-strategies> (accessed 25 March 2024).

73 Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) (2022) *Adaptation Action Plans*. Available: <https://www.climatechange.vic.gov.au/building-victorias-climate-resilience/our-commitment-to-adapt-to-climate-change/adaptation-action-plans-a-major-step-forward-for-climate-resilience-in-victoria> (accessed 2 April 2024).

74 Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) (2024) *Net Zero*. Available: <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/climate-change/emissions-reduction/net-zero> (accessed 2 April 2024).

75 DEECA (2023) *Climate action targets: Ambitious targets guiding Victoria to net-zero by 2045*. Available: <https://www.climatechange.vic.gov.au/climate-action-targets> (accessed 2 April 2024).

76 Department of Health (2023) *Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2023-2027*. Melbourne: Department of Health, p 27.

77 Department of Health (2023) As above.

78 Premier of Victoria (2022) *More food relief on the way*. Media release, 28 January 2022. Victorian Government.

79 E.g. City of Melbourne (2024) *Community Food Relief 2021 – 2025*. Available: <https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/community/health-support-services/health-services/Pages/community-food-relief-planning-for-a-food-secure-city.aspx> (accessed 8 April 2024).

Food safety

Food safety and environmental health policy supports food system resilience by ensuring that food remains safe for human consumption throughout food supply chains, from production to processing, and food retail. Food standards are developed by the statutory authority, *Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ)*, and enforced by government agencies at national, state and local level.⁸⁰

All local governments in Victoria have statutory responsibilities related to food safety. Environmental Health Officers ensure that local food businesses comply with food safety regulations under the state *Food Act 1984* and the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code.⁸¹ Local governments also register new food businesses in their area.

Disaster preparedness

Critical infrastructure and emergency management legislation and policy at all levels of government ensure the continuity of food supplies during a disaster and establish procedures for distribution of food relief.

Emergency management

Emergency management policy includes a focus on the provision of food relief during disasters, with responsibilities shared across state and local government, civil society organisations and industry. The Red Cross has the main responsibility for ensuring access to food during emergencies in Victoria, supported by Foodbank Victoria and the Salvation Army.⁸² However, 'emergency food relief' provided by the charitable sector has become the primary approach to addressing both long-term and short-term food insecurity in Victoria (see section 3.4), and there is a need for new approaches to address food insecurity that are grounded in the human right to food (see section 3.8).

Critical infrastructure

Critical infrastructure policy is governed by a food and grocery supply group (federal) and food and grocery resilience sector network (state), comprising government, industry and (in the case of the state network) civil society organisations.⁸³ Their role is to ensure the continued availability of food and groceries during an emergency. However, the primary focus is on short-term resilience building, and there is a lack of long-term planning to build the underlying resilience of the state's food system. There is also little focus on the cascading effects of compounding shocks or their interactions with ongoing environmental stresses.

There is a lack of long-term planning to build the underlying resilience of Victoria's food system

There's very little linking of disaster management that may affect food production, even in flood-prone areas. You get floods over floodplains where a lot of food is grown, so I haven't seen anything that does the connecting. – Interview 22, Civil society

We tend to view resilience through an emergency management lens, as opposed to many resilience practitioners that would view emergency management through a resilience lens as part of a much bigger framework. – Interview 10, Government

80 Department of Health and Aged Care (2021) *Food standards and safety*. Available <https://www.health.gov.au/topics/food-and-nutrition/about/food-standards-and-safety> (accessed 8 April 2024)

81 Department of Health (2022) *Food safety laws and regulations*. Available: <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/food-safety/food-safety-laws-and-regulations> (accessed 25 March 2024).

82 Murphy, M., Carey, R., and Alexandra, L. (2022) *The resilience of Melbourne's food system to climate and pandemic shocks*. University of Melbourne, Australia. <https://doi.org/10.46580/124370>.

83 Murphy, M. et al. (2022) As above.

Economic

Economic policy includes tax, fiscal, monetary, trade, labour and social welfare policy. Federal economic policy influences food system resilience from production to consumption through impacts on food exports and imports, the cost of food, farm viability and food worker livelihoods.

A significant focus for federal and state government policy is increasing food production, with an emphasis on growing food exports. For example, *Ag2030*, a central pillar of federal agricultural policy, aims to grow the sector to \$100 billion by 2030.⁸⁴ However, little attention is given to economic approaches that value the external costs of food. Planning for resilient food systems requires ‘true cost accounting’ to assess the impacts of food systems on environmental sustainability, livelihoods, income, and health. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations estimates these combined costs at \$77 billion for Australia in 2020.⁸⁵

Government policy has an emphasis on increasing food production for export

The federal government has a particular influence on food access for Victorians through economic policy and social welfare policy. Household food insecurity has many complex drivers, but the main causes lie in poverty and disadvantage⁸⁶, and a high proportion of households that receive income support payments are food-insecure.⁸⁷ Setting income support payments at levels that facilitate access to a healthy diet and extending income support to groups that are currently excluded (such as temporary visa holders) is therefore important to addressing food insecurity.⁸⁸ The Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) recommends that JobSeeker and related payments should be raised to at least A\$76 a day in line with pension payments and should be indexed to wage and price increases.⁸⁹

A food systems approach to food resilience planning

As this review of the policy context has shown, there are many policies and legislative frameworks at multiple levels of government that influence the resilience of Victoria’s food system and food security in the state. However, policy portfolios are fragmented and there is no co-ordinated approach to promoting food system resilience in Victoria.

The issue that I see is that, to date, every decision that’s made, and every framework that’s been developed, has been in those silos and there’s been no mechanism or no cross-portfolio collaboration. – Interview 11, Industry

We talk a lot about how government’s approach is very siloed, and there isn’t really a whole food system approach anywhere. – Interview 4, Government

84 DAWE (2022) As above.

85 FAO (2023) *The State of Food and Agriculture 2023 – Revealing the true cost of food to transform agrifood systems*. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc7724en>.

86 Godrich, S., Barbour, L. and Lindberg, R. (2021) Problems, policy and politics – perspectives of public health leaders on food insecurity and human rights in Australia. *BMC Public Health* 21: 1132.

87 Temple, J., Booth, S. and Pollard, C. (2019) Social assistance payments and food insecurity in Australia: Evidence from the household expenditure survey. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 16 (3): 455.

88 Carey, R. et al. (2022) As above.

89 ACOSS (2023) *It’s not enough’: Why more is needed to lift people out of poverty*. September 2023. Australian Council of Social Service.

A 'whole of government' approach is needed to food resilience planning

A food systems approach to policy for food resilience planning is a 'whole of government' approach, which aims to co-ordinate actions across relevant government departments to promote the resilience of food systems and food security.⁹⁰ However, governments typically develop policy within individual departmental portfolios, and adopting a food systems approach can be challenging. Our research has revealed a lack of understanding at all levels of government (federal, state and local) about what a food systems approach to policy is and how to implement it.

I don't know whether different areas of government really understand the breakdown of what we mean by a food system and what part they play in that. – Interview 23, Industry

In food systems there's still inconsistent understanding across councillors about what it means...there's quite a bit of complexity that's quite tough to get across to the decision makers sometimes. – Interview 5, Government

2.7 Barriers and opportunities

There are a range of potential barriers and opportunities to implementing food resilience planning in Victoria.

Opportunities

- The growing frequency of food system disruptions due to shocks is creating public debate and policymaker awareness about the need to strengthen food system resilience
- The Victorian parliamentary *Inquiry into securing the Victorian food supply* and *Inquiry into food security in Victoria* in 2024 provide an opportunity to advocate for integrated legislative and policy frameworks for food resilience planning in the state
- Policy developments such as the *Planning for Melbourne's Green Wedges and Agricultural Land Action Plan 2024*⁹¹ and the proposed new metropolitan planning policy, *Plan for Victoria*⁹², have the potential to build food system resilience by strengthening protection for agricultural land

Barriers

- Food resilience planning is complex and there is limited stakeholder understanding of what it is or how to implement it
- Policy is typically developed in silos, which undermines a 'whole of government' approach to food resilience planning
- There is a policy emphasis on short term resilience in the context of emergencies, rather than building the long-term resilience of Victoria's food system to future shocks and stresses
- Agricultural policy focuses primarily on growing food exports, with limited focus on the resilience of Victoria's food supply for the domestic population

90 Candel, J. and Pereira, L. (2017) Towards integrated food policy: Main challenges and steps ahead. *Environmental Science and Policy* 73: 89-92.

91 Department of Transport and Planning (2024) As above.

92 Department of Transport and Planning (2024a) *Developing a new plan for Victoria: Help us shape the future for Victoria*. Available: <https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/guides-and-resources/strategies-and-initiatives/developing-a-new-plan-for-victoria> (accessed 2 April 2024).

2.8 Recommendations

- Develop a **'whole of government'** approach to **planning resilient food systems** as part of a food security strategy for Victoria (see section 3.10.)
- Build capacity among policymakers and other stakeholders about what it means to adopt a **'food systems' approach** to food resilience planning and how to implement it
- Strengthen the federal and state **policy focus on the long-term resilience of food supplies** to promote food security in the face of shocks and stresses

2.9 Research gaps

Resilience concepts have been applied to food systems relatively recently⁹³, and researchers are still investigating the features that make food systems resilient in the context of shocks and stresses.⁹⁴ As food resilience planning is in its infancy, there are many research gaps including:

- Overarching theoretical frameworks to inform a 'food systems' approach to food resilience planning
- Agreed definitions of key concepts to support food resilience planning
- An evidence base on effective policy actions to support food resilience planning at national, regional and local levels
- Food resilience planning indicators and evaluation frameworks

93 Béné, C., Headey, D., Haddad, L., and von Grebmer, K. (2016) Is resilience a useful concept in the context of food security and nutrition programmes? Some conceptual and practical considerations. *Food Security*, 8 (1): 123-138. doi:10.1007/s12571-015-0526-x.

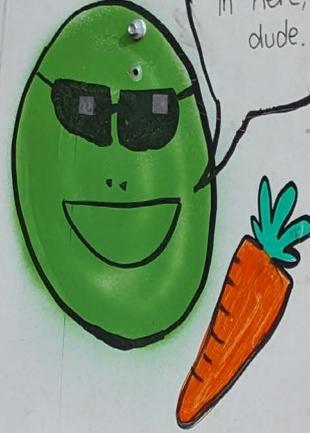
94 Murphy, M., Carey, R., and Alexandra, L. (2023) Building the resilience of agri-food systems to compounding shocks and stresses: A case study from Melbourne, Australia. *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems* 7. doi:10.3389/fsufs.2023.1130978.

SECTION 3

Food security & the human right to food

FREE FOOD

There's only room for one green potato in here, dude.



GIVE WHAT YOU CAN TAKE WHAT YOU NEED

WELCOME ALL
FREE

This cabinet is for community members to share food, blankets + hygiene products
#MUTUALAID

Please close door
Wiggle it around to close it sometimes



3.1 Introduction

When shocks and stresses disrupt food systems, it leads to rising food prices and growing food insecurity.⁹⁵ This chapter examines approaches to promoting food security and addressing food insecurity in Victoria. It highlights a lack of accountability within government for whether Victorians have access to adequate healthy, sustainably produced and culturally appropriate food, and it makes the case for developing a ‘whole of government’ food security strategy that is grounded in the ‘human right to food’.

3.2 What is food security?

There is a common narrative that Australia is a food secure country⁹⁶, because it produces and exports a significant amount of food. Over 70% of Australia’s agricultural production is exported.⁹⁷ However, food security is about more than how much food is produced.

Food security is about more than how much food is produced

Food security

“Food security is a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary preferences and needs for an active and healthy life”⁹⁸

Early definitions of food security in the 1970’s focused on the availability of food in the food supply, but the concept of food security has evolved since, with greater focus on food access.⁹⁹ People are food secure when they have the means to access the food available in the food supply in a way that meets their nutrition needs and their personal and cultural food preferences.

Other important dimensions of food security include ‘stability’, the ability to maintain food security during sudden shocks, and two new dimensions proposed in 2020, agency and sustainability (see Table 2).¹⁰⁰ The dimension of sustainability recognises that food should be produced in a way that regenerates natural ecosystems and does not compromise the long-term food security of future generations. Agency refers to people’s capacity to exert control over their own food provisioning, and it emphasises that human rights, particularly the human right to food, are central to achieving food security (see section 3.6).¹⁰¹ Table 2 summarises the six dimensions of food security.

Left: Image Foodprint Melbourne

95 FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO (2023) *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2023. Urbanization, agrifood systems transformation and healthy diets across the rural–urban continuum*. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc3017en>.

96 E.g. ABARES (2020) *Analysis of Australia’s food security and the COVID-19 pandemic*. ABARES Insights, Issue 3 2020. Australian Bureau of Agricultural Resource Economics and Sciences.

97 ABARES (2024) *Snapshot of Australian agriculture 2024*. ABARES Insights issue 1 March 2024. Australian Bureau of Agricultural Resource Economics and Sciences.

98 HLPE (2020) *Food security and nutrition: building a global narrative towards 2030*. A report by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security, Rome.

99 Clapp, J., Moseley, W., Burlingame, B. and Termine, P. (2022) Viewpoint: The case for a six-dimensional food security framework. *Food Policy* 106, 102164.

100 HLPE (2020) As above.

101 Clapp, J. et al. (2022) As above.

Table 2 The Six dimensions of food security, adapted from HLPE (2020)¹⁰²

Dimension of food security	Summary
Availability	Having a quantity and quality of food available in the food supply (through domestic production or imports) to meet dietary and cultural needs.
Access (economic, social and physical)	Having the financial means to acquire food for an adequate diet in a way that doesn't compromise other basic needs.
Utilisation	The ability to use food to safely prepare meals that meet nutritional needs through access to adequate storage, equipment and clean water.
Stability	Ensuring food security in the event of sudden shocks (e.g. climate events, economic shocks or conflicts) or ongoing stresses (e.g. drought).
Agency	Having the capacity to act independently to make choices about what we eat and to participate in the policy decisions that shape food systems.
Sustainability	Ensuring that food needs for the current generation are met without compromising the food needs of future generations, and contributing to long term regeneration of natural, social and economic systems.

This understanding of food security highlights that food security is influenced by the decisions and actions of many government departments at multiple levels of government (federal, state and local), including policy portfolios relating to agriculture, environment, social services, health and the economy (see section 2.6).

3.3 Food security in Victoria

It is difficult to get an accurate picture of food security in Victoria. In common with most regions of the world, there is monitoring of only two of the six dimensions of food security - availability and access. Monitoring of food availability and access also provides an incomplete picture of these dimensions of food security.

Food availability

Monitoring of food availability in Victoria and Australia focuses primarily on the economic contribution of food production, particularly the volume and economic contribution of food exports.¹⁰³ There is little reporting by government on the availability of food at state or national level for the domestic population, the extent to which food availability meets nutrition and cultural needs or the impacts of shocks and stresses on food availability and prices.

¹⁰² HLPE (2020) As above.

¹⁰³ E.g. Victorian Government (2024) *Victorian food and fibre export performance: data report 2022-23*. Melbourne: Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR) and Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA).

Victoria's food supply draws on state, national and global sources of food. Food imports make up a relatively small proportion of the state's food supply. Australians spend around 11% of their food and drink expenditure in retail stores on imported products¹⁰⁴, and most food imports into Australia are of processed rather than fresh foods, including canned and frozen fruit and vegetables and confectionary.¹⁰⁵ Australia is relatively self-sufficient in its supply of fresh foods.

Victoria is a significant producer and exporter of some foods. It is the second largest agricultural producer by value after New South Wales, and it has the highest food exports by value of all Australian states.¹⁰⁶ Victoria's main food exports are grains, meat (particularly beef and lamb) and dairy¹⁰⁷, and surpluses of these foods can buffer potential shortages in supply due to shocks and stresses. However, neither Victoria nor Australia has significant surpluses in production of all fresh foods, particularly foods such as fruit and vegetables, which are important to a healthy diet. There are national shortfalls in production of some fruit and vegetables to meet recommended dietary intake.¹⁰⁸ Fruit and vegetable prices in Australia are also particularly affected by shocks, such as extreme weather events, as these crops are vulnerable to climate impacts and because Australia is largely dependent on domestic supply of these fresh foods.¹⁰⁹

There is a need for better monitoring and reporting of food *availability* for the domestic population in Australia in relation to population needs for a healthy and sustainable diet. This should include monitoring of the *stability* dimension of food security – that is, how food availability and prices are affected by shocks and stresses - and the *sustainability* dimension, including the extent to which food production supports regeneration of natural ecosystems.

Food access

Monitoring of food insecurity in Victoria and elsewhere in Australia has been infrequent and has often been narrow in scope¹¹⁰, so there is uncertainty about what proportion of Victoria's population has difficulty accessing adequate food. The 2022 Victorian Population Health Survey indicates that around 8.1% of Victorian adults had experienced 'severe food insecurity' in the past 12 months; that is, they had run out of food and could not afford to buy more.¹¹¹ This represents a 40% increase in severe food insecurity in Victorian adults in two years, as the prevalence of severe food insecurity in 2020 was 5.8%.¹¹²

Monitoring of food insecurity has been infrequent and narrow in scope

Prevalence of severe food insecurity varies across Victorian local governments and ranged from 2 to 13% in 2020. Severe food insecurity can be much higher than average in certain population groups, particularly people who are unemployed or unable to work, people in low-income households and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.¹¹³

104 ABARES (2020) As above.

105 Hogan, L. (2018) *Food demand in Australia: Trends and issues 2018*. ABARES research report 18. Canberra: Australian Bureau of Resource Economics and Sciences.

106 Agriculture Victoria (2023) *Victorian agriculture industry overview. January 2023*. Available: https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/928545/FACTSHEET_Victorian-Agriculture-Overview_Jan2023.pdf (accessed 16 March 2024).

107 Victorian Government (2024) As above.

108 Larsen, K., Turner, G., Ryan, C. and Lawrence, M. (2011) *Victorian food supply scenarios: Impacts on availability of a nutritious diet*. VEIL, CSIRO and Deakin University.

109 Quiggin, J. (2007) *Drought, climate change and food prices in Australia*. University of Queensland.

110 McKechnie, R., Turrell, G., Giskes, K., and Gallegos, D. (2018) Single-item measure of food insecurity used in the National Health Survey may underestimate prevalence in Australia. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health* 42: 389-95.

111 VAHI (2024) *Victorian Population Health Survey 2022*. Victorian Agency for Health Information Available: <https://vahi.vic.gov.au/reports/victorian-population-health-survey> (accessed 11 April 2024).

112 VAHI (2022) *Victorian Population Health Survey 2020 – Dashboards*. Victorian Agency for Health Information. Available: <https://vahi.vic.gov.au/reports/population-health/victorian-population-health-survey-2020-dashboards> (accessed 21 March 2024).

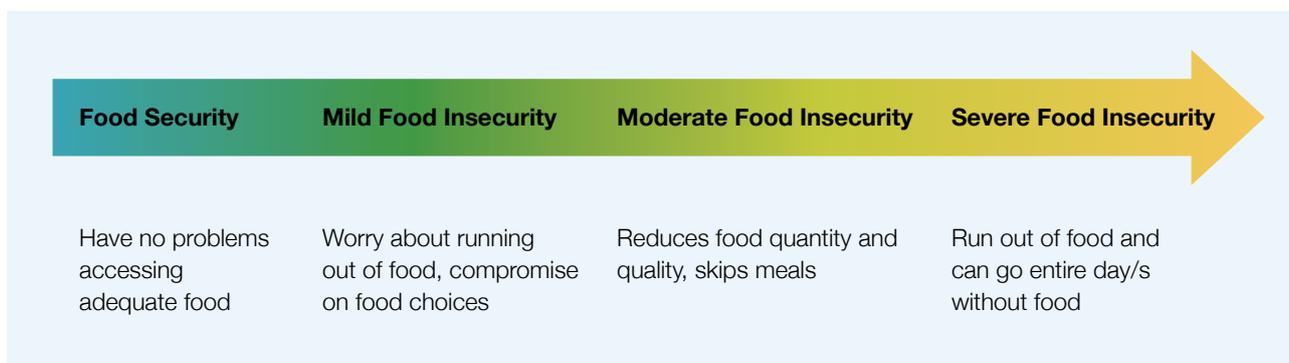
113 VAHI (2022) As above.

First Peoples' food sovereignty

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders peoples in Australia have significantly higher levels of food insecurity than the general population – estimates range from around 22 to 32%.¹¹⁴ High levels of food insecurity among Aboriginal Australians are influenced by broader social determinants of health, related to inequities in income, employment and education.¹¹⁵ They are also rooted in the impacts of colonisation, which have undermined Aboriginal foodways, including access to traditional foods and to the lands, waterways and economic resources to produce these foods. Food security for Aboriginal Australians is therefore linked to sovereignty and self-determination.¹¹⁶ The concept of Indigenous food sovereignty recognises this. It emphasises the importance of sovereignty over land and waterways for the food security of First Peoples and, “the right for Indigenous Peoples to choose, to cultivate and to preserve their food practices” (see section 3.7).¹¹⁷

Monitoring of food insecurity in Australia has typically focused on measuring only severe food insecurity using a single survey question, but this approach is out of step with international best practice.¹¹⁸ The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) tracks progress against Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 ‘Zero Hunger’ by measuring the proportion of a population that experiences *moderate or severe* food insecurity. People experiencing ‘moderate food insecurity’ face uncertain access to food and need to take steps to avoid running out. They may skip meals, eat cheaper and less healthy foods, and compromise other basic needs so that they can eat (see Figure 2).¹¹⁹

Figure 2. Food insecurity, adapted from FAO (2024)¹²⁰ and Australian Household Food Security Data Coalition (2022)¹²¹



114 Davies, A., Gwynn, J., Allman-Farinelli, M., Flood, V., Dickson, M., Turner, N., Porykali, B. and Lock, M. (2023) Programs Addressing Food Security for First Nations Peoples: A Scoping Review. *Nutrients* 2023, 15, 3127. <https://doi.org/10.3390/nu15143127>.

115 Browne, J., Gilmore, M., Lock, M. and Backholer, K. (2020) First Nations Peoples’ participation in the development of population-wide food and nutrition policy in Australia: A political economy and cultural safety analysis. *International Journal of Health Policy and Management* 10(12), 871-885. doi:10.34172/ijhpm.2020.175.

116 Browne, J. et al. (2020) As above.

117 FAO (2021) *The White/Wiphala Paper on Indigenous Peoples’ food systems*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb4932en>.

118 McKechnie, R. et al. (2018) As above.

119 FAO (2024) *Hunger and food insecurity*. Available: <https://www.fao.org/hunger/en/> (accessed 3 April 2024).

120 FAO (2024) As above.

121 Australian Household Food Security Data Coalition (2022) *Household Food Security Data Consensus Statement*. Available: <https://righttofood.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Household-Food-Security-Data-Consensus-Statement2022.pdf> (accessed 10 April 2024).

Measuring food insecurity by focusing narrowly on whether people have run out of food and been unable to afford to buy more underestimates the scale of the problem in Australia. Studies that use more sensitive measurement tools to assess food insecurity to varying degrees of severity typically find that the prevalence of food insecurity in Australia is at least 5% higher than studies that use single-item tools to measure only 'severe' food insecurity.^{122,123}

There is a need for greater understanding of the scale, nature and causes of food insecurity in Victoria.

There's very, very poor data...it doesn't really tell us a picture for our municipality so we wanted to really understand what's happening locally so we can try and strengthen our advocacy efforts.
– **Interview 20, Government**

That would be an obvious opportunity... for the state government...and then federal government to actually properly monitor and document the extent and phenomenon and patterns of change over time of food insecurity in Australia. – **Interview 12, Civil Society**

Understanding the scale and severity of food insecurity in Victoria is important to progress policy action to address the issue. Regular monitoring of food insecurity is becoming particularly important given evidence of rising food insecurity in the state¹²⁴, and because of the impacts of more frequent and severe shocks to food systems on food prices. Greater understanding is also needed of food insecurity in children, which is poorly understood in Victoria. The most commonly used tool to measure food insecurity in high income nations globally is the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Household Food Security Survey Module (HFFSM), which measures varying degrees of food insecurity in households and includes questions focused on food security in children.¹²⁵ This tool could be adopted for regular monitoring of food insecurity in Victoria.

Emergency food relief is the main approach to addressing food insecurity in Victoria

3.4 Approaches to addressing food insecurity in Victoria

The main mechanism for addressing food insecurity in Victoria and other states of Australia is emergency food relief. Food relief is generally delivered by charitable organisations, using surplus food donated by the food industry.^{126,127} During the COVID-19 pandemic, governments increased their funding and support for food relief services in response to rising food insecurity.¹²⁸ Emergency food relief was designed to address short term food needs and is important during disasters. However, many people are dependent on food relief over the long term.¹²⁹

Food relief is meant to be a short term thing...but what is really obvious is that people don't spend a couple of months food insecure. People spend...potentially years needing to access food relief. – **Interview 19, Government**

122 McKay, F., Haines, B., and Dunn, M. (2019) Measuring and understanding food security in Australia: a systematic review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 16 (3) 476.

123 McKechnie, R. et al. (2018) As above.

124 VAHI (2024) As above.

125 USDA (2023) Food security in the US: Survey tools. Available: <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-u-s/survey-tools/> (accessed 23 March 2024).

126 Carey, R., Murphy, M., Alexandra, L., Sheridan, J., Larsen, K. and McGill, E. (2022) *Building the resilience of Melbourne's food system – a roadmap*. University of Melbourne, Australia. <https://doi.org/10.46580/124371>.

127 Kleve, S., Greenslade, D., Farrington, M., Funston, S., David, B., Xi, J., Swiney, C., Clarke, E. Pollard, C. and Booth, S. (2023) Perspectives of food insecurity and service delivery amongst emergency food relief clients in a regional city in Victoria, Australia. *Health and Social Care in the Community*. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2023/8711041>.

128 Premier of Victoria (2022) *More food relief on the way*. Media release, 28 January 2022. Victorian Government.

129 McKenzie, H., Lindberg, R., and McKay, F. (2023) Navigating the Australian Welfare System for Those Relying on Emergency and Community Food Assistance. *Social Policy and Society*, 1-13. doi:10.1017/s147474642200063x.

Emergency food relief depends mainly on donations, so the food can be highly processed and may not meet nutritional needs.¹³⁰ Recipients of food relief do not have control over their own food provisioning, and the food provided may not meet their cultural food preferences. Clients of food relief services often experience shame and embarrassment, which is a barrier to accessing services.¹³¹

Having to line up and then wait for your bag of produce that you had no choice over what was inside, I think that that's often the way when you go to a food bank...you just get what you get.
– **Interview 24, Civil society**

Emergency food relief does not address the underlying drivers of food insecurity, which lie primarily in poverty.¹³² The cost of living (particularly food, energy and housing) is a key driver of food insecurity, along with underemployment and low welfare payments.¹³³

We have to understand that the number one contributor to [food insecurity] is poverty. Unless we can address that, we're going to be constantly band-aiding this issue.
– **Interview 21, Civil society**

The root cause of food insecurity, as far as we're concerned, is poverty and cost of living and housing costs and those kind of things and really, you're talking about the taxation system, the housing system. – **Interview 12, Civil society**

There is an increasing emphasis on 'food with dignity' approaches to address food insecurity that are grounded in the human right to food (see sections 3.6 and 3.8). The human right to food is also closely linked to the right to housing and the right to social security.¹³⁴

130 Lindberg, R., Whelan, J., Lawrence, M., Gold, L. and Friel, S. (2015) Still serving hot soup? Two hundred years of a charitable food sector in Australia: a narrative review. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health* 39 (4): 358-365.

131 Foodbank/Ipsos (2023) *Foodbank hunger report 2023: National findings key report*. Foodbank Australia.

132 Godrich, S., Barbour, L. and Lindberg, R. (2021) Problems, policy and politics – perspectives of public health leaders on food insecurity and human rights in Australia. *BMC Public Health* 21: 1132.

133 Foodbank/Ipsos (2023) As above.

134 Office of the High Commission for Human Rights (2010) *The right to adequate food. Fact sheet No. 34*. Paris: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, p5.

3.5 Food security policy in Victoria

Food security is an outcome of activities that take place throughout food systems from production to consumption and the generation and reuse of food waste.¹³⁵ There are six different dimensions of food security – availability, access, utilisation, stability, agency and sustainability (see section 3.2). However, policy to promote food security in Victoria focuses on some dimensions (such as availability) more than others (such as access). Policy also overlooks some dimensions (such as agency) altogether.

There is a significant policy focus in both federal and state government on increasing agricultural production, supporting the *availability* dimension of food security. However, the emphasis is on increasing food production for exports, rather than the availability of a healthy and sustainable food supply for the domestic population (see section 2.6).

Policy focus on the *access* dimension of food security is limited at both federal and state level. The emphasis of policy is on encouraging healthy food choices, rather than ensuring that people have adequate access to sufficient healthy, sustainably produced and culturally appropriate food (see section 2.6). Indeed, there is no clear responsibility or accountability at any level of government for ensuring that all Victorians have adequate access to food, which limits effective policy action.

There is no clear government accountability for ensuring that all Victorians have adequate access to food

I don't see much accountability at all...I don't know if there is any actual interest in addressing food security, which is a worry. – Interview 7, Government

The Victorian Government provides some funding to the charitable sector for emergency food relief.¹³⁶ However, this form of support for food access does not support the *agency* dimension of food security (see section 3.2). Some local governments in Victoria contribute to the *agency* dimension of food security by supporting 'food with dignity' initiatives such as social supermarkets and community-based markets, and by enabling residents to participate in the development of policies and initiatives that shape their local food systems (see section 3.8). However, like other levels of government, the responsibilities of local governments for food access are unclear.

Victorian local governments are engaged in a wide range of policy activities that aim to transform food systems.¹³⁷ However, they have clear statutory responsibilities for only a small number of food-related activities, such as registering food businesses and food safety, municipal coordination of food relief during disasters and local land use planning (see section 2.6). This can make it difficult for local governments to justify a focus on building the resilience of their local food systems.

When there's so many things we could be working in...clarifying [our] role is crucial... is it our role, or is it state government's role? ...Where does this [food systems] work sit? – Interview 5, Government

I think that that's something that councils struggle with, understanding what their responsibility and accountability is, or due diligence, to make sure that food is accessible, affordable, to...local communities. – Interview 8, Industry

135 HLPE (2020) As above.

136 Premier of Victoria (2022) As above.

137 Reeve, B., Carrad, A., Rose, N., Charlton, K. and Aguirre-Bielschowsky, I. (2021) *Australian Local Food System Policy Database*. Available: <https://law-food-systems.sydney.edu.au/policy-database> (accessed 26 March 2024).

The following table summarises the relevance of local government policy areas for action to promote the six dimensions of food security. It draws on a food systems approach to food security policy.

Table 3 Victorian local government policy focus in relation to the six dimensions of food security¹³⁸

Food security dimension	Local government department	Primary policy focus
Availability	Planning	Protection of agricultural land through local planning policy, public land for community gardens and food markets, verge gardening policy, planning for healthy and diverse food retail
	Economic development/ Agribusiness	Support for farmers and food businesses, agri-tourism, agri-food job creation, establishing public food markets
	Parks and recreation	Community gardens and orchards, community composting
	Environmental health	Registration of food businesses
Sustainability	Sustainability	Promoting sustainable agriculture and home/community gardening
	Waste management	Reduction of food loss and waste
Stability	Emergency management	Co-ordination of municipal food relief during disasters
	Community resilience	Community-building food initiatives
Access	Public health	Increasing access to healthy food
		Supporting food relief
		Healthy food retail in community settings
		Healthy and sustainable food procurement
Utilisation	Environmental health	Food and water safety
Agency	Public health/Sustainability	Participatory approaches to development of food policies that involve communities
		Support for food with dignity initiatives

138 HLPE (2020) As above.

A food systems approach to food security policy

There is growing international recognition of the importance of taking a *food systems approach* to policy and governance to promote food security. A food systems approach focuses on the governance of food supply chains from farm to fork. It also focuses on all six dimensions of food security, rather than focusing narrowly on increasing the *availability* of food through increased food production (see Figure 3).¹³⁹

Figure 3. Policy and governance to support six interconnected dimensions of food security, adapted from HLPE (2020)¹⁴⁰



139 Fanzo, J (2023) Achieving food security through a food systems lens. In Bene, C and Devereux, S (eds) *Resilience and food security in a food systems context*. Palgrave MacMillan.

140 HLPE (2020) *Food security and nutrition: building a global narrative towards 2030*. A report by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security, Rome.

Many local governments in Victoria have developed ‘whole of government’ food strategies to promote healthy, sustainable, resilient, prosperous and equitable food systems.¹⁴¹ However, neither the Australian nor Victorian Government has an integrated ‘whole of government’ food plan. Responsibilities related to different dimensions of food security are currently distributed across multiple federal and state government departments, with limited co-ordination between them (see section 2.6).

Any issues pertaining to food security, are looked at and have been traditionally looked at in the silos of industry or government portfolios. As a result, we have policies and frameworks and initiatives that are being developed that don’t have a holistic view and don’t have regard to the fact that food security actually impacts every single aspect of our day-to-day lives. – Interview 11, Industry

A food systems approach to the development of policy for food security requires mechanisms to co-ordinate policy development across government.¹⁴² The final report of the 2023 parliamentary *Inquiry into food security in Australia* recommended that the Australian Government should develop, “a comprehensive National Food Plan providing for the food security, including nutritional security, of the nation and its people”.¹⁴³ A parliamentary *Inquiry into food production and supply in New South Wales* in 2022 recommended that an integrated food systems plan should be developed for that state.¹⁴⁴ Many stakeholders interviewed for this research also highlighted the need for a ‘whole of government’ legislative and policy framework to promote food security in Victoria.

A ‘whole of government’ policy and legislative framework is needed to promote food security in Victoria

Without any sort of framework from a state government level we’re kind of just doing our own thing...it’s sometimes really hard to justify the work when we’re not funded to do it. It’s not a legislative requirement, there’s no state framework that we’re working under to do this work. – Interview 20, Government

3.6 What is the human right to food?

The human right to food is closely linked to the *agency* dimension of food security (see section 3.2), which emphasises people’s capacity to make their own decisions about what they eat or grow and their ability to engage in the decision-making processes that shape food systems.¹⁴⁵

The right to food

The human right to adequate food is, “the right of every individual, alone or in community with others, to have physical and economic access at all times to sufficient, adequate and culturally acceptable food that is produced and consumed sustainably, preserving access to food for future generations”.¹⁴⁶

141 Victorian local governments that have developed integrated food strategies include City of Melbourne, City of Greater Bendigo, Merri-bek City Council, Banyule Council, Cardinia Shire Council, Mornington Peninsula Shire, City of Darebin, City of Greater Geelong, Latrobe City Council, Indigo Shire Council, Manningham Council, Mitchell Shire Council, City of Ballarat and City of Casey. A number of local governments have also contributed to the development of regional food strategies (covering more than one local government). Alpine Shire Council, Benalla Rural City, Indigo Shire Council, Mansfield Shire, Rural City of Wangaratta and City of Wodonga have aligned their organisational priorities with the *North-East Local Food Strategy*. Healthy Loddon Campaspe is collaborating with six local governments - Campaspe Shire, Central Goldfields Shire, City of Greater Bendigo, Loddon Shire, Macedon Ranges Shire and Mount Alexander Shire - on the development of a *Regional Food System Framework* for the Loddon Campaspe region.

142 Centre for Food Policy at City, University of London and Results for Development (R4D) (2022) *Taking a Food Systems Approach to Policymaking: A Resource for Policymakers*. London and Washington D.C.

143 House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture (2023) *Australian food story: Feeding the nation and beyond*. Final report of the inquiry into food security in Australia. Parliament of Australia.

144 NSW Legislative Assembly Committee on Environment and Planning (2022) *Food production and supply in NSW*. Report 3/57. November 2022.

145 HLPE (2020) As above.

146 De Schutter, O. (2014) *Final Report: The transformative potential of the right to food*. Presented to the 25th Session of the UN Human Rights Council, United Nations General Assembly.

The human right to adequate food is recognised within international law in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) (1966).¹⁴⁷ The right to adequate food is recognised in these treaties as part of the right to an adequate standard of living:

“The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. The States Parties will take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of this right, recognizing to this effect the essential importance of international co-operation based on free consent.”

– Article 11.1 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has defined *adequate food* as food that meets dietary needs for physical and mental health, is safe and culturally acceptable. Adequate food is also sustainably produced, so that food is available and accessible over the long term to both present and future generations.¹⁴⁸

The right to adequate food is “the right to feed oneself in dignity” by either buying or producing one’s own food, rather than “the right to be fed”.¹⁴⁹ This means that people need sufficient money to be able to buy food or access to land, water and other resources to be able to grow it. The right to adequate food is linked to other human rights, including the right to housing, the right to health and the right to work and to social security.¹⁵⁰

Obligations in relation to the human right to food

Countries that have ratified the ICESCR – such as Australia – have binding obligations under the treaty. They have obligations to respect, protect and fulfil the right to adequate food.^{151,152}

Respect – Governments should not introduce measures that undermine access to food and should ensure that food-related policies effectively respect everyone’s right to food.

Protect – Governments should take measures that protect individuals’ access to adequate food from violations by others, including private enterprises.

Fulfil – Governments should take proactive steps to strengthen people’s access to resources and livelihoods to ensure their food security. If people are unable to meet their right to food, governments should fulfil that right through food assistance or social safety nets.

Some of these obligations are ‘immediate’ or short-term, particularly taking steps to ensure “freedom from hunger and malnutrition”¹⁵³, including during disasters. Other obligations can be realised progressively over the longer term, but governments should take steps to fully realise the right as quickly as possible. National governments are responsible for ensuring compliance with the treaty obligations.¹⁵⁴

147 *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, opened for signature 16 December 1966, 993 UNTS 3 (entered into force 3 January 1976) Art 11.

148 Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1999) *Substantive issues arising in the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. General Comment 12*. The right to adequate food (art. 11). 12 May 1999. United Nations Economic and Social Council.

149 Officer of the High Commission for Human Rights (2010) The right to adequate food. Fact sheet No. 34. Paris: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, p3.

150 Officer of the High Commission for Human Rights (2010) As above.

151 Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1999) As above.

152 Officer of the High Commission for Human Rights (2010) As above.

153 Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1999) As above, p1.

154 Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights (2015) *Guide to human rights*. June 2015. Commonwealth of Australia.

3.7 Policy context for the human right to food in Victoria

The Australian Government is responsible for respecting, protecting and fulfilling the right to adequate food. However, in accepting the obligations of the ICESCR, it undertakes that other Australian governments will do the same.¹⁵⁵ The responsibility for ensuring the right to adequate food is shared between the federal and state governments.

The Australian Attorney-General's Department has provided guidance to federal policymakers that the right to an adequate standard of living (including food, water and housing) needs to be considered when working on any laws, policies or programs that could impact the realisation of that right. This includes policies that, "could be relevant to the availability and sustainability of an adequate supply of nutritious food", and policies related to water supplies for agriculture, the availability of adequate food for Indigenous people and social welfare benefits.¹⁵⁶ The Attorney-General's Department also provides the following advice about interpreting the right to food¹⁵⁷:

"The UN Committee has stated that in the context of food, the concept of adequacy is to a large extent determined by prevailing social, economic, cultural, climatic, ecological and other conditions, and is linked to the notion of sustainability, which implies food security, namely that food should be accessible for both present and future generations. The Committee has also stated that, as part of their obligations to protect people's resource base for food, countries should take appropriate steps to ensure that activities of the private business sector are in conformity with the right to food."

Although Australia has obligations under international law in relation to the right to adequate food, the obligations cannot be enforced under Australian law, because the right to food has not been legislated in Australia.¹⁵⁸ Indeed, many human rights are not currently legislated in Australia, and there is no overall framework for implementing human rights nationally.¹⁵⁹

The Australian Human Rights Commission has proposed a national Human Rights Act for Australia, including the right to food as part of the right to an adequate standard of living¹⁶⁰:

Right to adequate standard of living

1. Every person has the right to access adequate housing.
2. No one may be unlawfully or arbitrarily evicted from their home.
3. Everyone has the right to have access to adequate food, water and clothing.

Victoria is one of three states and territories in Australia which have human rights legislation. The *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act (2006)* protects some civil, political and cultural rights. However, it does not include economic and social rights, such as the right to adequate food.¹⁶¹

155 Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) (2019) *Discussion paper: Ensuring effective national accountability for human rights*. Free and Equal, An Australian conversation on human rights. Australian Human Rights Commission.

156 Attorney-General's Department (n.d.) *Right to an adequate standard of living, including food, water and housing. Public sector guidance sheet*. Available: <https://www.ag.gov.au/rights-and-protections/human-rights-and-anti-discrimination/human-rights-scrutiny/public-sector-guidance-sheets/right-adequate-standard-living-including-food-water-and-housing> (accessed 31 March 2024).

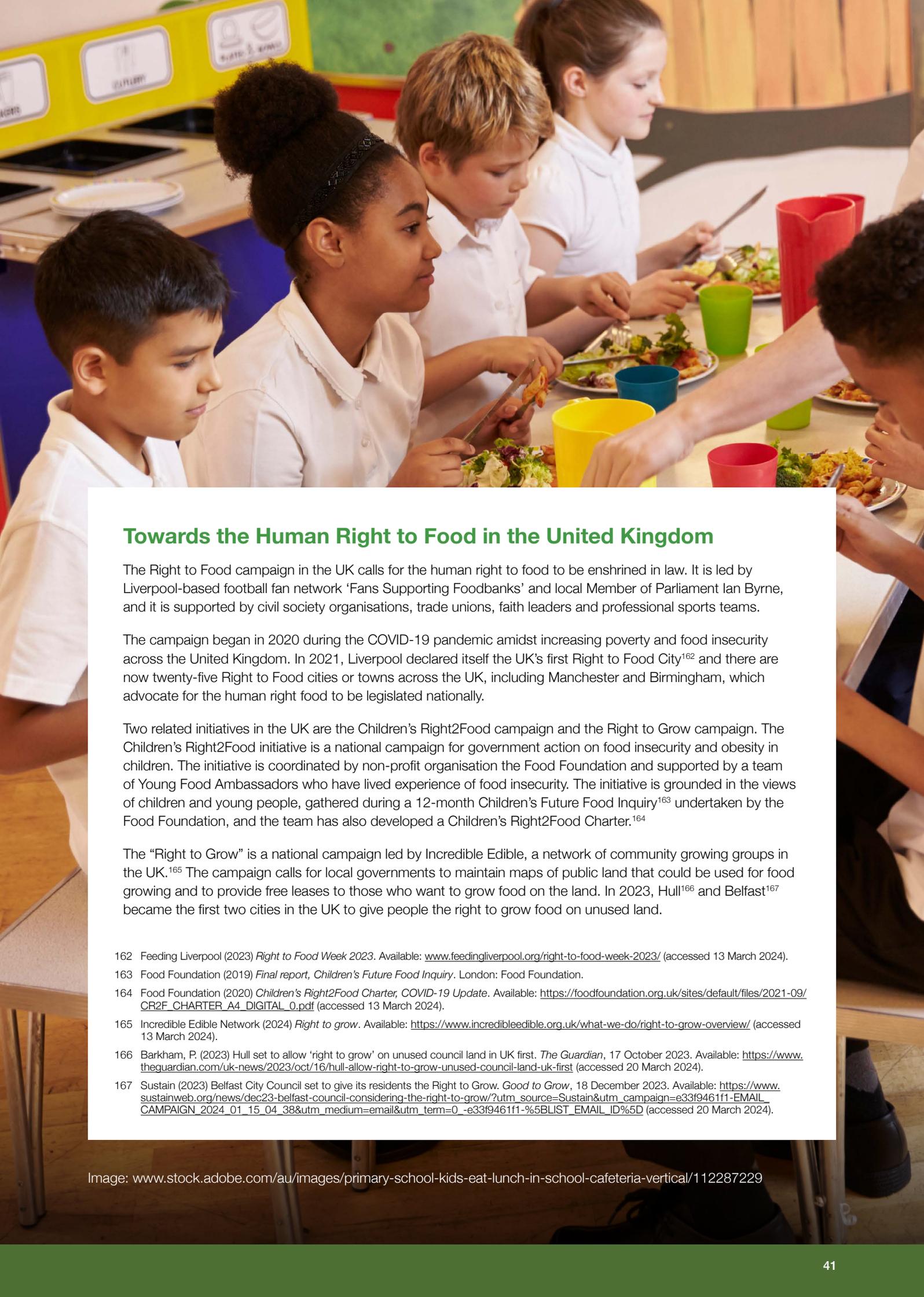
157 Attorney-General's Department (n.d.) As above.

158 Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights (2015) As above.

159 AHRC (2019) As above.

160 AHRC (2022) *Free & equal. Position paper: A Human Rights Act for Australia*. Australian Human Rights Commission.

161 *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)*. Available: <https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/charter-human-rights-and-responsibilities-act-2006/015> (accessed 31 March 2024).



Towards the Human Right to Food in the United Kingdom

The Right to Food campaign in the UK calls for the human right to food to be enshrined in law. It is led by Liverpool-based football fan network ‘Fans Supporting Foodbanks’ and local Member of Parliament Ian Byrne, and it is supported by civil society organisations, trade unions, faith leaders and professional sports teams.

The campaign began in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic amidst increasing poverty and food insecurity across the United Kingdom. In 2021, Liverpool declared itself the UK’s first Right to Food City¹⁶² and there are now twenty-five Right to Food cities or towns across the UK, including Manchester and Birmingham, which advocate for the human right food to be legislated nationally.

Two related initiatives in the UK are the Children’s Right2Food campaign and the Right to Grow campaign. The Children’s Right2Food initiative is a national campaign for government action on food insecurity and obesity in children. The initiative is coordinated by non-profit organisation the Food Foundation and supported by a team of Young Food Ambassadors who have lived experience of food insecurity. The initiative is grounded in the views of children and young people, gathered during a 12-month Children’s Future Food Inquiry¹⁶³ undertaken by the Food Foundation, and the team has also developed a Children’s Right2Food Charter.¹⁶⁴

The “Right to Grow” is a national campaign led by Incredible Edible, a network of community growing groups in the UK.¹⁶⁵ The campaign calls for local governments to maintain maps of public land that could be used for food growing and to provide free leases to those who want to grow food on the land. In 2023, Hull¹⁶⁶ and Belfast¹⁶⁷ became the first two cities in the UK to give people the right to grow food on unused land.

162 Feeding Liverpool (2023) *Right to Food Week 2023*. Available: www.feedingliverpool.org/right-to-food-week-2023/ (accessed 13 March 2024).

163 Food Foundation (2019) *Final report, Children’s Future Food Inquiry*. London: Food Foundation.

164 Food Foundation (2020) *Children’s Right2Food Charter, COVID-19 Update*. Available: https://foodfoundation.org.uk/sites/default/files/2021-09/CR2F_CHARTER_A4_DIGITAL_0.pdf (accessed 13 March 2024).

165 Incredible Edible Network (2024) *Right to grow*. Available: <https://www.incredibleedible.org.uk/what-we-do/right-to-grow-overview/> (accessed 13 March 2024).

166 Barkham, P. (2023) Hull set to allow ‘right to grow’ on unused council land in UK first. *The Guardian*, 17 October 2023. Available: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/oct/16/hull-allow-right-to-grow-unused-council-land-uk-first> (accessed 20 March 2024).

167 Sustain (2023) Belfast City Council set to give its residents the Right to Grow. *Good to Grow*, 18 December 2023. Available: https://www.sustainweb.org/news/dec23-belfast-council-considering-the-right-to-grow/?utm_source=Sustain&utm_campaign=e33f9461f1-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2024_01_15_04_38&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_-e33f9461f1-%5BLIST_EMAIL_ID%5D (accessed 20 March 2024).

No state or territory in Australia has legislated the right to adequate food. However, Queensland's *Human Rights Act (2019)* does include some economic and social rights related to education and health.¹⁶⁸ The right to adequate food could be included in Victoria's *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities* as part of the right to an adequate standard of living. Indeed, there may be significant public support for this. In research undertaken for a national human rights consultation in 2009, 96% of survey participants regarded the right to sufficient food, water and clothing as an important or very important human right.¹⁶⁹ The Victorian Food Systems and Food Security Working Group, a coalition formed in 2020 to promote food security in Victoria, also advocates for the right to adequate food to be legislated in the state:

Leverage Point 1: Right to Food Law¹⁷⁰

Create an enabling policy environment to transform Victoria's food system by legislating the right to food in Victoria and embedding it into all relevant State and Local Government policies, budgeting processes and activities.

There are few examples of federal or state government policy that acknowledge the human right to adequate food. However, some local governments in Victoria have included the human right to food as a principle underpinning their food strategies (see Table 4).



Image: Foodprint Melbourne

168 AHRC (2019) As above.

169 Brennan, F., Kostakidis, M., Willaims, T. and Palmer, M. (2009) *National human rights consultation report*. September 2009. Attorney-General's Department.

170 Victorian Food Systems and Food Security Working Group (2021) *Towards a healthy, regenerative and equitable food system in Victoria: A consensus statement*. Available: https://vicfoodsystem.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Food-Systems-Consensus-Statement_Web-20220324_.pdf (accessed 31 March 2024).

Table 4 Acknowledgement of the human right to food in Victorian local government food strategies

Local government	Policy document	Policy extract
Cardinia Shire Council	Cardinia Shire Community Food Strategy 2018-26	“Food security is a human right. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights includes the right of every person ‘to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing’. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966 was ratified by Australia in 1975, and requires that all state parties take immediate steps to guarantee the right to freedom from hunger for all persons in their jurisdiction; and to take appropriate steps towards the ‘progressive realization’ of the right to adequate food.” (p 20)
Merri-bek City Council	Moreland Food System Strategy Extension 2020-2024	“Apply human rights and equity principles to all actions and initiatives, recognising that access to nutritious and culturally appropriate food is a fundamental and universal human right.” (p 5)
City of Melbourne	Draft Food Policy: Food City 2024-2034	“Food City 2024–34 reflects our commitment to actively work towards the fundamental and universal human right to safe, nutritionally adequate and culturally appropriate food for all people. We will engage with all levels of government and stakeholders across the food system to secure these basic rights as set out in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which Australia ratified in 1975.” (p 7)
City of Darebin	Urban Food Production Strategy 2014-2018	“Access to adequate nutritious and safe food is a basic human right.” (p 14)
Banyule City Council	Urban Food Strategy 2023-2027	“Access to good food is a basic necessity and a fundamental human right. Food is also a tool for connection, celebration and inclusion of diverse cultural identities. Banyule residents value food as central to their social lives and connection to community. They wish to see food recognised and valued for its unique role in community building.” (p 25)

3.8 Implementing the human right to food

A wide range of legislative and policy approaches are necessary to implement the human right to food, including the development of a ‘whole of government’ national food security strategy that adopts a ‘food systems’ approach and is grounded in the human right to food (see section 3.4).¹⁷¹ The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has developed a set of 19 Voluntary Guidelines¹⁷² that describe a recommended approach to implementing the human right to food. The guidelines advise that special attention be given to realisation of the right to food for vulnerable population groups, such as Indigenous Peoples and children.^{173,174}

171 Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1999) As above, p7.

172 FAO (2005) *Voluntary guidelines to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security*. Adopted by the 127th session of the FAO Council, November 2004. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

173 FAO (2005) As above.

174 Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1999) As above.

First Peoples' right to food

First Peoples' agricultural and food practices can make significant contributions to resilient food systems and biodiversity conservation globally.^{175,176} They are also important to the food security of First Peoples (see section 3.3). First Peoples' food practices are undermined by ongoing processes of colonisation,¹⁷⁷ which have denied Aboriginal Australians their rights to practice traditional approaches to food production on their lands.¹⁷⁸

The human right to food is closely linked to the realisation of other rights (see section 3.6). For First Peoples, this includes the right to self-determination and the right to land. The *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP) includes the right of First Peoples to, “own, use develop and control” lands that they have traditionally owned or occupied (article 26.2).¹⁷⁹ Access to land and other resources needed for food production (such as water, forests and fisheries) is therefore central to realisation of the right to food for First Peoples.¹⁸⁰

UNDRIP also includes the right to self-determination for First Peoples (article 3). One important aspect of this right, which is linked to the human right to food, is economic development. The emerging native foods industry in Australia is an opportunity for self-determined economic development. However, only a small proportion of businesses in the industry are currently Aboriginal-owned and controlled.¹⁸¹ Investment is needed in initiatives led by Traditional Owners to reclaim leadership of the native foods industry in Victoria and to protect the Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property embedded in native foods.¹⁸²

Another important aspect of self-determination related to the human right to food is the right of First Peoples to participate in decisions on issues that affect their rights.¹⁸³ There are few examples in Australia of food-related policy processes in which Aboriginal Australians have had significant involvement. There is a need for culturally safe policy-making processes for food-related policies that support Aboriginal self-determination.¹⁸⁴

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1989) requires governments to take measures to ensure “the provision of adequate nutritious foods and clean drinking water” for children (article 24.2).¹⁸⁵ One widely used approach to increasing access to nutritious food for children is school meal programs.

175 IPCC (2019) *Climate Change and Land: an IPCC special report on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems* [P.R. Shukla, J. Skea, E. Calvo Buendia, V. Masson-Delmotte, H.-O. Pörtner, D. C. Roberts, P. Zhai, R. Slade, S. Connors, R. van Diemen, M. Ferrat, E. Haughey, S. Luz, S. Neogi, M. Pathak, J. Petzold, J. Portugal Pereira, P. Vyas, E. Huntley, K. Kissick, M. Belkacemi, J. Malley, (eds.)]. In press.

176 IPBES (2019) *Summary for policymakers of the global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystems of the Intergovernmental Science Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services*. IPBES Secretariat: Bonn, Germany.

177 Browne, J. et al. (2020) As above.

178 Pascoe, B. (2014) *Dark Emu*. Magabala Books.

179 United Nations (General Assembly). *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People*. 2007.

180 FAO (2009) *The right to food guidelines and Indigenous Peoples: An operational guide*. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

181 Honan, K. (2021) Demand for bush food is booming, so why are so few Indigenous people involved in the sector? *ABC Rural*, 9 July 2021. Available: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-07-09/native-food-sector-seeks-connection-with-indigenous-australia/100271318> (accessed 26 April 2022).

182 Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations (FVTOC) (2021) *Victorian Traditional Owner native food and botanicals strategy*. <https://www.fvtoc.com.au/native-foods-and-botanicals> (accessed 4 December 2022).

183 United Nations (General Assembly). *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People*. 2007, art 18.

184 Browne, J. et al. (2020) As above.

185 *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, opened for signature 20 November 1989, 1577 UNTS 3 (entered into force 2 September 1990) Art 24.

School meal programs

School meals are meals provided to children by schools, typically lunch, but also school breakfast programs.¹⁸⁶ School meal programs can improve diet quality, school attendance and educational attainment.¹⁸⁷ They can also be used to deliver food education, promote sustainable and healthy diets, and support local farmers (through farm to school programs).¹⁸⁸

Over 40% of primary school children globally receive school meals. Some programs provide free school meals to children from low-income households, while other families pay. However, there is a move to provision of universal free school meals, where all children in a particular school or region receive a free school meal. These programs reduce the stigma associated with accessing free school meal programs and have been shown to be cost-effective.¹⁸⁹

Countries with universal free school meal programs include England (which provides free school meals nationally to children in certain year levels), the USA (which provides free school meals to children in certain schools or districts with high levels of poverty) and Finland (which provides free school meals to all school children).¹⁹⁰ The global School Meals Coalition advocates for all children globally to have access to nutritious school meals by 2030. Over 95 countries and regions have joined this coalition, hosted by the UN World Food Programme, including the USA, Canada, China and the European Commission. Australia is not part of this coalition.¹⁹¹ School meal programs in Australia are generally limited to breakfast programs (and some lunch programs) provided by charitable organisations in disadvantaged schools.¹⁹²

Right to food approaches to addressing food insecurity are grounded in 'food with dignity'

Food with dignity

In 'right to food' approaches to addressing food insecurity within communities, there is an emphasis on shifting from traditional models of emergency food relief to 'food with dignity' approaches.

So in terms of... dignity [it's] about being able to choose what is suitable for you and your cuisine and your diet, and that might reflect your culture and your needs of your household and all of those sort of things, to try and provide an experience for someone who is having to access emergency food in a way that makes you feel like you have some kind of agency or choice in the matter. – Interview 24, Civil society

186 Oostindjer, M., Aschemann-Witzel, J., Wang, Q., Skuland, S., Egeland, B., V. Amdam, G., Schjøll, A., Pachucki, M., Rozin, P., Stein, J., Lengard Almlil, V. and Van Kleef, E. (2017) Are school meals a viable and sustainable tool to improve the healthiness and sustainability of children's diet and food consumption? A cross-national comparative perspective. *Critical Reviews in Food Science and Nutrition* 57 (18): 3942-3958.

187 Cohen, J., Verguet, S., Giyose, B. and Bundy, D. (2023) Universal free school meals: the future of school meal programmes? *The Lancet* 402: 831-833.

188 Oostindjer, M. et al. (2017) As above.

189 Cohen, J. et al. (2023) As above.

190 Cohen, J. et al. (2023) As above.

191 School Meals Coalition (2024) *The School Meals Coalition*. Available: <https://schoolmealscoalition.org/> (accessed 2 April 2024).

192 Manson, A., Johnson, B., Smith, K., Dunbabin, J., Leahy, D., Graham, A., Gallegos, D.*, Golley, R.* (*co-senior author) (2022) *Do we need school meals in Australia? A discussion paper*. Flinders University.

An Independent Working Group on Food Poverty, established by the Scottish Government in 2015, developed four 'Dignity Principles' for implementing dignified approaches to address food insecurity.¹⁹³

The Dignity Principles¹⁹⁴

1 Involve in decision-making people with direct experience of food insecurity

Design services that deliver effective and dignified support by listening to the views and experiences of people with lived experience of food insecurity e.g. create mechanisms for inclusive decision-making, such as steering groups and inclusive boards.

2 Recognise the social value of food

Deliver high quality, socially and culturally acceptable food. Design projects so people feel emotionally and socially supported e.g. create welcoming community spaces to share food.

3 Provide opportunities to contribute

Enable people to contribute to projects to enhance their sense of value and self-worth e.g. by volunteering or paying something for their food if they feel able to.

4 Leave people with the power to choose

Enable people to make choices about what, where, when, how and with whom they eat e.g. enable people to select or grow their own food.

Community groups in Victoria and elsewhere in Australia are developing models for dignified access to food that are based on similar principles. These models include community-based markets and social supermarkets that provide a choice of low-cost food in a setting that encourages social interaction, voucher schemes that give people the power to choose their food, and urban farms and community gardens that provide access to land and resources for people to grow their own food.

Right: Image The Community Grocer

193 Independent Working Group on Food Poverty (2016) *Dignity: Ending hunger together in Scotland*. The Scottish Government.

194 Nourish Scotland (2018) *Understanding the Dignity Principles in practice – summary of findings*. Nourish Scotland.



Community food markets and stores providing food with dignity

Community-based markets and stores are providing people with safe and inclusive environments to access healthy and affordable food with dignity. The Community Grocer in Victoria, Nowra Community Food Store in New South Wales and the Food Centre Supermarket in South Australia all provide low cost fresh food and groceries to people on low incomes. They are run by non-profit organisations and volunteers, and no income checks or memberships are required to shop there.

The Community Grocer “aims to increase social, economic and physical access to food” by establishing community markets that supply culturally appropriate food at affordable prices.¹⁹⁵ It supports over 200 customers a week through its markets.

In addition to selling affordable groceries and family meal packs, The Food Centre also provides access to affordable clothing, household goods and social interaction through an onsite Op Shop, Café and Community Hub.¹⁹⁶ The Nowra Community Food Store provides groceries, fresh fruit and vegetables, cleaning and personal care products.¹⁹⁷

Some community markets and stores also operate voucher schemes to help people access fresh food. For example, The Community Grocer has a Grocer Gift program that enables community organisations to provide vouchers to help people purchase fresh fruit, vegetables and eggs at their community markets.¹⁹⁸ The Community Choice voucher program in Geelong helps community members to access food, prescription medication and household furniture from a range of community stakeholders and businesses.¹⁹⁹

195 The Community Grocer (n.d) *Our impact*. Available: <https://www.thecommunitygrocer.com.au/> (accessed 13 March 2024).

196 The Food Centre (2024) *About us*. Available: <https://thefoodcentre.com.au/> (accessed 13 March 2024).

197 Nowra Community Food Store (2024) *About us*. Available: <https://www.nowrafoodstore.com.au/about/> (accessed 13 March 2024).

198 The Community Grocer (n.d) *Grocer Gift*. Available: <https://www.thecommunitygrocer.com.au/grocergift> (accessed 13 March 2024).

199 Feed Geelong (n.d) *Community Choice*. Available: <https://www.feedgeelong.com.au/about-us/community-choice> (accessed 13 March 2024).



Growing access to culturally appropriate food in Victoria

Community gardens and urban farms are increasing access to culturally appropriate foods for migrants and refugees in Victoria. Initiatives such as United African Farm, Food Next Door Co-Op and Cultivating Community connect people with land to grow food, build community and share knowledge about food growing.

Many migrants and refugees can find it difficult to access culturally appropriate foods in Australia, and access to land can be a significant barrier for people to grow their own food. Cultivating Community facilitates access to community garden spaces for public housing tenants in inner Melbourne. The nonprofit organisation aims to create opportunities for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) community members to access healthy, affordable and culturally appropriate food.²⁰⁰

The Food Next Door Co-op connects newly arrived migrant and refugee groups with under-used farmland in regional areas. They are piloting the Sunraysia Burundian Garden in northwest Victoria and the Community Connections Garden in New South Wales.²⁰¹ At the Sunraysia Burundian Garden, members of the Burundian community are growing African maize and passing on traditional methods of cultivation and harvesting.

United African Farm in Cardinia, southeast Melbourne, was established by community members of African descent to “plant and grow crops of cultural significance” that connect them “to their roots”.²⁰² The farm aims to build community capacity and culture through food production, regular food markets, cultural exchange programs and employment opportunities.

200 Cultivating Community (2024) *Public Housing Community Gardens*. Available: <https://www.cultivatingcommunity.org.au/publichousingcommunitygardens/> (accessed 13 March 2024).

201 Food Next door Co-op (2024) *Who we are*. Available: <https://www.foodnextdoor.org.au/#whoweare> (accessed 13 March 2024).

202 United African Farm (2024) Available: <https://unitedafricanfarm.org/> (accessed 13 March 2024).

3.9 Barriers and opportunities

There are a range of potential barriers and opportunities to implementing a human right to food approach to addressing food insecurity:

Opportunities

- A growing focus on food insecurity in Victoria in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the cost of living crisis, which creates a policy window for action
- The 2024 Victorian parliamentary *Inquiry into food security in Victoria*²⁰³, which creates an opportunity for public and parliamentary debate about the causes of food insecurity and the role of human right to food approaches in addressing the problem
- Victoria's *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities*, which could be extended to include the human right to food as part of the right to an adequate standard of living

Barriers

- Limited data about food insecurity in Victoria, particularly at local government level, which impedes understanding of the scale of the problem and areas of particular need
- Lack of clarity about the responsibilities and accountabilities of all levels of government for promoting food security and addressing food insecurity
- Absence of a mechanism to hold governments to account for obligations relating to the human right to food, because it has not been legislated in Australia



Above: Image Foodprint Melbourne

Left: Image Cultivating Community

203 For more information about the Inquiry see <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/foodsecurityinquiry> (accessed 31 March 2024).

3.10 Recommendations

Food security monitoring

- Regular (at least biannual) **monitoring is needed of all six dimensions of food security**, including national monitoring of food *availability* (in relation to a healthy and sustainable diet), *stability* and *sustainability*
- Regular (at least biannual) **monitoring of food insecurity is needed** at national, state and local scale using a validated tool such as the USDA Household Food Security Survey Module. This should include gathering data about children as well as adults

Legislation

- Introduce a **federal Human Rights Act** that legislates the human right to food as part of the right to an adequate standard of living
- Legislate the human right to food in Victoria by including it in the state's *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities* as part of the right to an adequate standard of living

Policy

- Establish a robust **national framework for realising the human right to food** that sets expectations for national, state and local government. This should include:
 - A national human rights action plan for realising human rights, including the human right to food
 - Targets for implementing the human right to food, with regular tracking and reporting of progress against the targets
- Develop a **'whole of government' food security strategy for Victoria**, which is grounded in the human right to food. The strategy should address all six dimensions of food security and should adopt a 'food systems' approach. The strategy should establish clear accountability for addressing food security and realising the human right to food across government departments and levels of government
 - Embed **Aboriginal self-determination and food sovereignty** at the centre of Victoria's food security strategy
 - Provide **policy guidance to local governments** on developing local food strategies that recognise the right to food and have regard to state government targets
- Develop **local government food strategies and action plans** in collaboration with local communities, including community members with lived experience of food insecurity
- Support the objectives of the *Victorian Traditional Owner Native Foods and Botanicals Strategy*²⁰⁴ and **invest in Traditional Owner-led initiatives** to reclaim knowledge and practices in food production and to build food and farming enterprises

Food with dignity initiatives

- Introduce a state government **program of universal free school lunches** in Victorian schools
- Develop and implement local government and civil society initiatives that realise **dignified access** to healthy culturally appropriate food in collaboration with local communities

204 Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations (2021) *Victorian Traditional Owner Native Food and Botanicals Strategy*. Melbourne: Australia.

3.11 Research gaps

There are a number of research gaps related to food security:

- There is a need for more in-depth qualitative research into the lived experience of people experiencing food insecurity in Victoria, including children
- Investigation of approaches to co-developing 'food with dignity' initiatives to address food insecurity in collaboration with people who have lived experience
- Implementation of 'whole of government' approaches to address all six dimensions of food security
- Research into the policy barriers and opportunities for introducing universal free school meals in the Victorian context



Image: Foodprint Melbourne

SECTION 4

Tools for food resilience planning



4.1 Introduction

This section discusses the needs of Victorian stakeholders for guidance and tools to support food resilience planning and a 'human right to food' approach to promoting food security. It reviews existing tools, and it identifies gaps, where further guidance and tools are needed to support effective food resilience planning in the state.

4.2 Stakeholder needs

Victorian policymakers and other stakeholders currently have a relatively limited understanding of what food resilience planning is and how to implement it (see section 2.6), as this is a new field of practice. The stakeholders interviewed for this research therefore found it difficult at times to articulate specific types of tools and guidance required to support this activity. This section describes five broad categories of tools and support needed by Victorian stakeholders to strengthen the resilience of the state's food system.

Victorian stakeholders need tools and data to make the case for food resilience planning

Making the case

Many interviewees said that they needed tools and data to help them to 'make the case' for food resilience planning, including case studies and examples of food resilience planning in practice.

One of the trickiest things is getting others within council to understand their role in the food system. In terms of supports and things, examples of how people have been working across councils, that would be really useful ... case studies and examples are really great to have... this has been done somewhere else, we can do this. Here's how they did it.

– Interview 1, Government

Having the data to make the case, that's so critical, and to be able to keep making the case because as leadership changes, priorities shift. – Interview 20, Government

Case studies and concrete examples can also build understanding of what food resilience planning is and how to implement this approach in practice.

The need for data to 'make the case' is particularly important in understanding the extent, severity and causes of food insecurity in Victoria (see section 3.3). How policymakers and other stakeholders understand policy problems and their causes is influential in shaping potential responses.²⁰⁵ A more comprehensive picture of food insecurity in Victoria is also needed to make the case for solutions that are grounded in the human right to food. Robust and validated tools for measuring food insecurity are already available (see section 3.3).

Left: Image Foodprint Melbourne

205 Bacchi, C. (2009) *Analysing policy: What's the problem represented to be?* Pearson Australia.

Building capacity in a ‘food systems’ approach

This research has identified a lack of understanding among stakeholders about what it means to take a ‘food systems’ approach to food resilience planning (see section 2.7). There is a need for guidance and tools to build understanding about what a ‘food systems’ approach is and how to implement it.

Can we create some resourcing to raise the awareness and understanding of elected representatives in council chambers about food security or indeed a whole range of other issues, but how do we upskill them in terms of the oversight and leadership role that they play? Just understanding that whole system work is really important. – Interview 2, Government

Some interviewees highlighted a need for guidance about which departments to involve across government in food resilience planning, how to involve them and how to help them understand the connections between the work of their departments, food system resilience and food security.

Stakeholders emphasised the need for tools to map local and regional food systems. Some stakeholders mentioned existing tools that could be used to map aspects of local food systems, such as STICKE (Systems Thinking in Community Knowledge Exchange)²⁰⁶, which has been applied to mapping complex health issues. Others highlighted the need for tools to assess the resilience of food systems, including mapping interdependencies between food systems and other related systems, such as energy and transport systems.

If we were to map some of the interdependencies across urban systems and where are all of those touchpoints, where we can actually tweak the system to build in a greater sense of resilience. I think that interdependency mapping would be really helpful. – Interview 8, Industry

Tools are needed to build the long term underlying resilience of food systems

Scenario planning and envisioning for long-term resilience

There is a focus in some food resilience planning activity on relatively short-term objectives related to emergency preparedness, response and recovery (see section 2.6). However, stakeholders also emphasised the need for tools to support longer term resilience building. This includes tools to develop vision for resilient food systems and scenario planning tools that support communities to consider multiple possible future scenarios and how to plan for them e.g. how to adapt to climate change.

I think people are looking for more information from governments, some direction... they're just thinking, how do we not just make sure we're prepared for the events we've experienced in the past, but people are looking, planning towards the future. So if there were resources available for us, and also for community out there, I think that would be useful in terms of long-term planning. – Interview 4, Government

206 STICKE is an applied systems tool for understanding the drivers of unhealthy diets and opportunities for intervention to prevent chronic diseases. See <https://iisri.deakin.edu.au/project/sticke/> (accessed 29 March 2024).

Providing sector-specific guidance

Some stakeholders suggested that guidance could be developed for different sectors and portfolios on potential policies and actions to build food system resilience. This could include guidance for public health officers, sustainability officers or people working in waste management. For example, interviewees suggested that municipal planning officers would benefit from guidance and checklists to:

- Select the best land use zones to apply to protect agricultural land and support food production in their area
- Promote an integrated approach to considering multiple land use values, including food production, biodiversity and landscape values
- Enable a diverse range of community-based food production, including food production on verges and in public parks

Sector-specific guidance could also be developed on implementing human right to food approaches to promoting food security and addressing food insecurity, including advice on the obligations of government and other sectors to consider the human right to food, when this right should be considered, its scope and how this right relates to existing federal and state legislation.²⁰⁷

Developing indicators and evaluation frameworks

Multiple stakeholders highlighted the need for indicator and evaluation frameworks to measure and track progress in resilience and other dimensions of food systems.

We really want to get shared measures... we want to be able to create measures that we're all working towards, that strengthening of the food system, and shifting that food system.

– Interview 25, Civil society

They suggested that multiple types of metrics are needed, including social, climate, health and economic metrics.

Everything we do has to be in a way that will hit the ears of Treasury and Finance.

– Interview 16, Government

The Local Food EPI+ (Local Food Systems Policy Index) was mentioned as a tool for benchmarking local government actions to progress healthy, sustainable and equitable food systems.²⁰⁸ Indicators are also required to track progress towards a human right to food approach to food security.

I guess you'd want to see, has there been a transition from reliance on food donations? ... How have those... facilitating approaches to the right to food...been operating in a sense of have they enabled people? – Interview 18, Civil society

Indicator frameworks are needed to track progress in building food system resilience

207 The Australian Attorney-General's Department has developed guidance for the federal public sector on implementing the human right to food (as part of the right to an adequate standard of living) - <https://www.ag.gov.au/rights-and-protections/human-rights-and-anti-discrimination/human-rights-scrutiny/public-sector-guidance-sheets/right-adequate-standard-living-including-food-water-and-housing> (accessed 29 March 2024).

208 INFORMAS/GLOBE (2022) Local food systems policy index (Local-Food EPI+), Victoria, Australia. Assessment of local government policies for creating healthy, equitable, environmentally sustainable food systems in Victoria, Australia. Domains, policy areas and indicators. Deakin University. Available: <https://nourishnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/249/2023/11/Local-Food-EPI-consolidated-indicators-1.pdf> (accessed 29 March 2024).

4.3 Existing tools

Food system resilience is an emerging concept (see section 2.2), and tools to support planning for more resilient food systems have only recently become available. We identified 26 food resilience planning toolkits of relevance to Victorian stakeholders. Most could be used by stakeholders at municipal or regional scale. The majority of these toolkits have been developed in the last five to six years, so there is little information about the use of these toolkits in practice or evaluation of them.

We identified three main types of food resilience planning toolkits (see Table 5 for examples of these toolkits).

- 1 Process**– the most common type of toolkit describes a detailed step-by-step process for stakeholders to collaborate on planning more resilient food systems. These toolkits include guiding questions, templates, and case studies. They are comprehensive, but the process can be intensive, requiring a significant time investment over an extended period.
- 2 Framework** – these toolkits are underpinned by theoretical frameworks for food resilience that may adapt or bring together existing concepts such as food security dimensions, climate resilience frameworks, and food system sustainability and resilience concepts. They are theoretically-driven, and some are complex and could be challenging for stakeholders to apply in real world settings.
- 3 Audit** – these are checklist and scorecard toolkits for conducting a food resilience assessment (e.g. of a local area). This is the least common type of toolkit but may be one of the most useful for Victorian stakeholders, because of its simplicity and ease of use. However, this simplicity comes at the expense of the detailed guidance needed to support development of a food resilience action plan.

In addition to these three types of toolkits specific to food resilience planning, we also identified examples of general toolkits to support food system transformation that could also be used to support food resilience planning.

We ranked toolkits for their utility and ease of use. The top seven 'best practice' toolkits are featured in Table 5 below and can also be accessed via [our project website](#).

Table 5 Best practice toolkits for food resilience planning

Toolkit name	Toolkit type	What is it?	Why use it?
Disaster resilience scorecard for cities: Food system resilience addendum (2022)	Audit	This Scorecard was developed by the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction to rank and assess a city's food system resilience in disaster scenarios. The scorecard assesses 10 food system essentials for making city food systems resilient.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses specifically on assessing food system resilience of cities in disasters. • Comes with a useful Excel version of the tool. • Easy-to-use bench-marking tool. • Does not include a focus on building the long-term resilience of food systems.
Community & Agriculture Resilience Audit Tool - CARAT (2023)	Audit	CARAT is a self-assessment tool to help community stakeholders assess the resilience of their food system. It has seven categories of indicators for scoring resilience, and was developed by the North American Food System Network.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aimed at community stakeholders. • A holistic approach to assessing food system resilience. • An easy to use scorecard with around 100 indicators. • Has a focus on community resilience.

Toolkit name	Toolkit type	What is it?	Why use it?
Building Sustainable and Resilient City Region Food Systems Assessment and Planning Handbook (2023)	Process	A comprehensive (140 page) Handbook released by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to help stakeholders conduct an assessment of their city region food system (CRFS) and develop a plan to strengthen their CRFS.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a clear focus on building resilience to shocks in regional food systems. • Aimed at cities and city regions. • A thorough assessment that requires time and resources to complete. • Provides clear steps on how to do an assessment. Has links to many additional tools in a complementary Toolkit.
Food System Resilience: A planning guide for local governments (2022)	Process	A comprehensive Planning Guide developed by the John Hopkins Center for a Liveable Future and the Bloomberg Center for Government Excellence (in collaboration with 5 US cities) to help local governments to develop food system resilience strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a clear focus on building resilience to shocks in city food systems. • Aimed at cities and local governments. • An equity- and justice-centred approach. • A set of six sequential modules to follow. • Contains practical templates and links to information about key concepts.
FIT4FOOD2030 Knowledge Hub	Framework	This Knowledge Hub of hands-on tools for food systems transformation was developed during the FIT4FOOD2030 project funded by the European Union.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A searchable database of tools for facilitating food system transformation. • Not specific to food system resilience. • Includes tools for food systems communication, education and developing future vision. • The tools are flexible and can be used individually or as a part of a sequence.
Collaborative Framework for Food Systems Transformation. A multi-stakeholder pathway for sustainable food systems (2019)	Process	This Framework was released in 2019 by the United Nations Environment Programme to support stakeholders in applying a food systems approach to policy making and implementation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aimed at local and national governments. • Has a policy and governance focus. • Not specific to food system resilience. • A simple and accessible four part framework. • Case studies provide practical and tangible examples.
Infrastructure Resilience Planning Framework. Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency (2023)	Process	This planning Resilience Planning Framework aims to help policymakers understand the risks associated with critical infrastructure across sectors, including the agri-food sector. It was developed by the US Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses on identifying and mitigating risks to infrastructure. • Aimed at policy makers at all levels of government. • A clear step-by-step process. • Highlights opportunities to enhance food system resilience.



Enabling resilient food systems toolbox

The Enabling Resilient Food Systems toolbox²⁰⁹ is a collection of “links, processes, gadgets and examples” to help local governments to strengthen the resilience of local food systems.

The toolbox was developed in 2022 through a collaboration between government and civil society stakeholders in South Australia²¹⁰, including the City of Onkaparinga, Alexandrina Council, City of Marion, Mount Barker District Council, City of Salisbury and City of Holdfast Bay, Green Adelaide, the Heart Foundation and Ethical Fields. The toolbox was developed to support stakeholders and communities to build the resilience of local food systems to risks from climate change, and it was funded by a Local Government Association Research and Development Scheme grant from the Local Government Association of South Australia.

Resources in the toolbox aim to help local governments plan resilient and healthy food systems with their communities. There are tools to support the development of community vision for resilient food systems and to build food systems literacy. There are also communication templates for sharing information about activities and outcomes. The toolbox has been designed to be flexible, depending on experience, context and resources.

209 South Australian Urban Food Network (n.d) *Enabling resilient food systems toolbox*. Available: <https://www.saubanfood.org/planners-toolbox>. (accessed 13 March 2024).

210 Local Government Association of South Australia (2022) *Enabling resilient food systems in SA*. Available: <https://www.lga.sa.gov.au/members/financial-sustainability/grants/research-and-publications/library/2020/enabling-resilient-food-systems-sa> (accessed 13 March 2024).

4.4 What new tools are needed?

This research has identified five different types of tools and guidance needed by stakeholders to support food resilience planning (see section 4.2). In particular, there is a need for tools and guidance to:

- Make the case for food resilience planning at different levels of government, including concrete examples, case studies and data
- Build understanding about what it means to take a ‘food systems’ approach to food resilience planning and how to implement this approach
- Measure food system resilience and progress in strengthening the resilience of food systems
- Implement ‘whole of government’ approaches to policy and governance for food resilience planning
- Implement obligations in relation to the human right to food across all sectors, including development of government policy relating to the availability and accessibility of nutritious, culturally appropriate and sustainably produced food

Tools are needed to support a ‘food systems approach’ to food resilience planning

The most common types of existing toolkits and guidance to support food resilience planning are process toolkits, which outline detailed step-by-step processes, and frameworks, which are underpinned by conceptual and theoretical frameworks (see section 4.3). Both types of toolkits are likely to require significant resources and funding to use.

The lack of clarity about government responsibilities and accountabilities for food resilience planning and food security currently limits access to the resources and funding required for stakeholders to use these toolkits effectively (see sections 2.6 and 3.5). It also contributes to a focus among stakeholders in Victoria on ‘making the case’ for food resilience planning and action to address food insecurity.

The next stage of the Victorian food resilience planning project will focus on co-development of a ‘how to’ guide to support Victorian stakeholders in food resilience planning. The ‘how to’ guide will address gaps in existing tools and guidance and will particularly aim to support stakeholders in making the case for food resilience planning, building capacity to implement a food systems approach and implementing obligations in relation to the human right to food.

SECTION 5

Conclusion



Victoria's food system is likely to be affected by more frequent and more severe shocks in future, due to the impacts of climate change, including floods, storms, and fire.²¹¹ The COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine have also highlighted how global shocks can affect local food systems. Each shock affects food systems in different ways, but all contribute to rising food prices and growing food insecurity (see section 2.2).

Victoria is a significant food producer, but food insecurity is rising across the state. A growing number of Victorians run out of food and cannot afford to buy more (see section 3.3). Others must take steps to avoid running out of food, such as skipping meals or eating less healthy foods. Many people who are food insecure rely on emergency food relief provided by charitable organisations. Some do not access these services due to shame and embarrassment, or because demand for food relief exceeds supply.^{212,213}

Access to adequate food is a human right. The Australian Government has obligations under international law to help people to realise this right in cooperation with states and territories. However, the responsibilities for food security and implementation of the right to food are unclear at all levels of government, which undermines effective action to promote food security and food system resilience in Victoria. There is a need to establish clear government accountability for ensuring that Victorians have access to adequate food.

All levels of government have a role in food resilience planning – that is, taking actions to strengthen the underlying resilience of food systems to shocks and stresses. A 'whole of government' approach is needed to co-ordinate the policy actions of all government departments that influence the resilience of food systems and food security. A 'food systems' approach is also needed to support actions throughout food supply chains to strengthen food system resilience, from production to consumption and management of food waste.

This research has highlighted examples of best practice in food resilience planning internationally and in Australia, and it has identified existing tools to support aspects of food resilience planning. It has also found gaps in the guidance, tools and research needed to support Victorian stakeholders in undertaking food resilience planning. There is a particular need for guidance and tools to support stakeholders in making the case for food resilience planning and in adopting a 'food systems' approach to food resilience planning. The next stage of the *Victorian food resilience planning project* will focus on collaborating with Victorian stakeholders to co-develop tools and guidance to support them in this work.

Clear government accountability is needed for ensuring that Victorians have adequate access to food

Left: Image Foodprint Melbourne

211 Murphy, M., Carey, R., and Alexandra, L. (2023) Building the resilience of agri-food systems to compounding shocks and stresses: A case study from Melbourne, Australia. *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems* 7. doi:10.3389/fsufs.2023.1130978.

212 Lindberg, R., Whelan, J., Lawrence, M., Gold, L. and Friel, S. (2015) Still serving hot soup? Two hundred years of a charitable food sector in Australia: a narrative review. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health* 39 (4): 358-365.

213 Community Information and Support Victoria (CISVic), Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS) (2021) *More than a band-aid: Emergency Relief in Victoria*. Melbourne: Australia.

