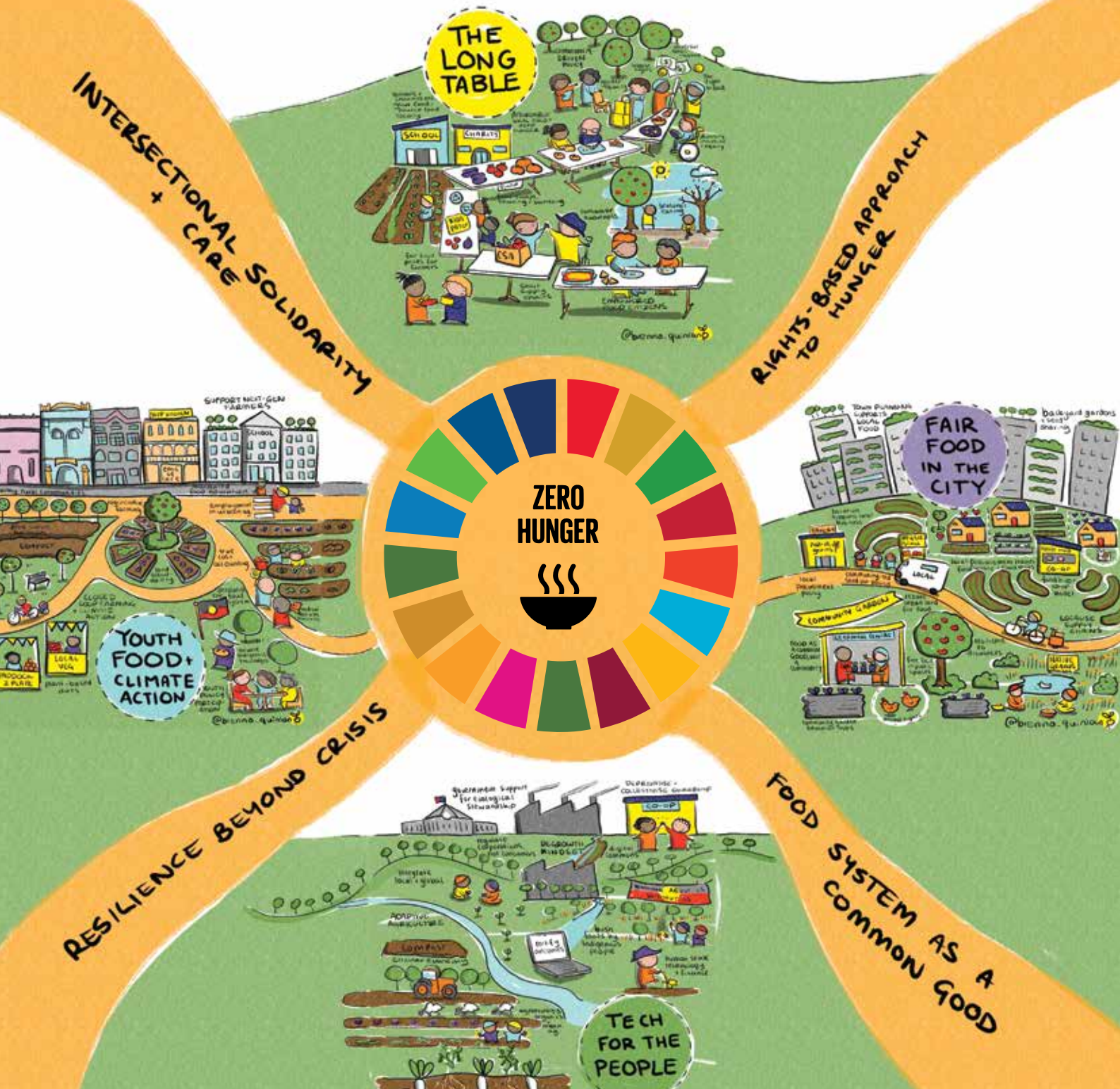


Fair Food Futures

Future scenarios for Food Justice and Zero Hunger in Australia:
A synthesis for policy action



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CREATE CHANGE

In 2019-2022, UQ researchers conducted a national Australian Research Council funded study to explore how Australian community food networks envisage and work towards more just and sustainable food systems. This research engaged close to a hundred participants from civil society – including small-scale food producers, alternative distributors, community gardeners, food charity representatives and local food advocates – with the aim of co-creating community-led visions of food justice in Australia.

What does your FAIR FOOD FUTURE look like, and how do we get there?

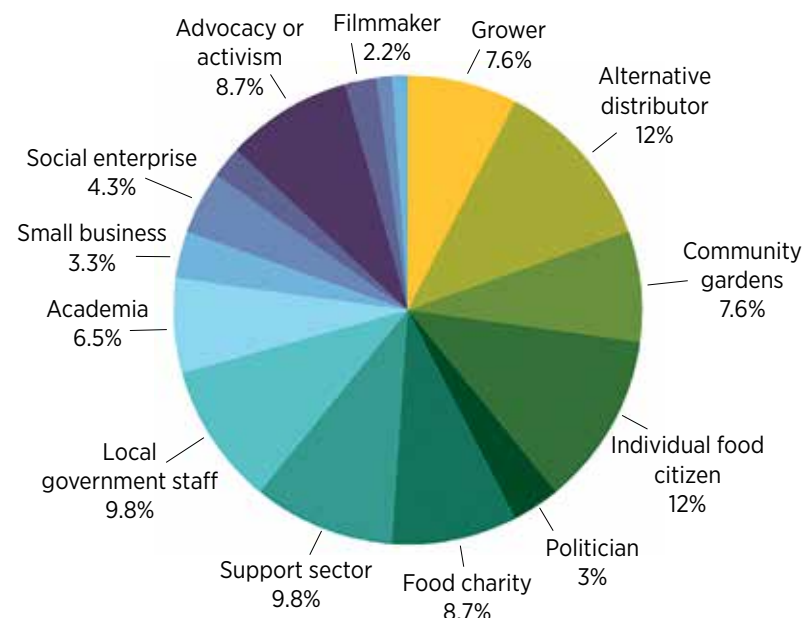
While Australia is not widely seen to have a food security problem, inequitable access to food is a significant domestic problem. Some 3.6 million Australians are food insecure; more than 30% of edible food is wasted; and there has been a 10% rise in people seeking food relief in

the past 12 months; with Indigenous people, migrants, asylum seekers, refugees, the aged, unemployed, young and rural people most vulnerable. Pandemics, floods, drought, bushfires and political conflict further highlight challenges to food system resilience and equity: panic buying, food charities unable to keep up with demand, rising food prices, and increased hunger amongst the most vulnerable groups.

In Australia, and elsewhere, **community food networks** such as urban gardens, community supported agriculture, farmers' markets, organic cooperatives, food charities, food hubs, food swaps, and 'fair food' organisations are important civil society stakeholders who actively confront these inequalities within food systems. This research has confirmed that community food networks tend to emphasise equitable access to food that is healthy, ecologically sustainable, and fairly produced, exchanged and consumed – that is, **food justice**.

There are many ways to practice food justice in Australia, and no single definition. In sum, by emphasising equity and everyone's right to determine healthy and just food systems, food justice can be differentiated from food security approaches focused on producing more food. Food justice therefore provides important insights for thinking about alternative food futures. They are examples of food utopias that we can learn from. And they are growing.

PARTICIPANT SAMPLE



TOTAL

100+ participants gave their input via participatory workshops and interviews



SECTORS

Participants represent a wide array of civic food networks and actors



LOCATIONS

Participants were located in SE Qld, NSW, Victoria and Tasmania; mostly urban



ETHICS

All Participants gave written or verbal consent to participate in the research

Findings

This study used participatory workshops and interviews to explore grassroots visions for the future of food. Starting with key 'drivers of change' identified by participants, qualitative future scenarios as a method acknowledges that different futures are possible and provides a process for exploring multiple scenarios for embracing or avoiding certain possibilities.

The scenarios can help communities and policy makers to debate equitable pathways to achieve Zero Hunger and help to reform food system governance with stronger participation from civil society.

These visions have been synthesised and distilled into the following 4 future scenarios for reducing hunger in the Australian food system.



The 1st scenario was created from considering the drive to reduce hunger and food insecurity alongside an increased role for cohesive and organised food movements and activism. The scenario emphasises food at the centre of social movements' demands for rights-based policy approaches.

The scenario sits at the intersection of two pathways for transformation – 'Intersectional solidarity and care', and 'Food and rights for all'.



The 2nd scenario was created to respond to two important drivers of food system change: shifts towards more sustainable agricultural production, alongside pressures on land use for urban development.

This resulted in a scenario that is mostly urban-focused, but that also considers how cities connect with rural places. This vision sits at the intersection of two pathways – 'Food and rights for all' and 'Food system as a common good'.



The 3rd scenario was created by thinking about a food future driven by young people's climate action. The second driver of change was an ethic of social justice, which was identified by workshop participants as defining young people's desire to see equitable access to healthy and nutritious food valued alongside ecological care and care for each other. The scenario sits at the intersection of two pathways: 'Intersectional solidarity and care', and 'Resilience beyond crisis'.



The 4th scenario emerged from discussions about the negative impacts that corporate concentration in the food system has for food security, whereby participants saw the push for more democratic control of technologies as a key driver of change.

Complimenting this focus was the high uptake of sustainable agricultural methods, which many agreed are gaining traction as viable alternatives to 'Business as usual', and the second driver in this scenario.

This scenario sits at the intersection of two pathways – 'Resilience beyond crisis' and 'Food system as a common good'.

THE LONG TABLE

Food has therefore become a key mechanism through which to address a wide range of systemic inequalities associated with income, housing, health, education, geographic location, gender, and cultural background.

Importantly, food charities have moved away from redistributing food waste towards approaches to healthy consumption that also ensure dignity and enjoyment and have joined forces with other social movements to advocate for systemic solutions.



2

FAIR FOOD IN THE CITY

This scenario re-imagines cities as places for strengthening resilience, where healthy food is grown on the streets, in verge gardens, parks, apartment blocks, backyards and community gardens.

Cultural and ecological diversity is reflected in the streetscapes of our suburbs, and much more food is free and available to all. To achieve this, town planning is committed to rethinking land access and repurposing

urban spaces to grow more food, and regulatory barriers have been reduced. Food systems have also been integrated with wider land use policy, climate policy, and sustainability across the board.

Food justice is achieved when citizens and community groups have a major say over the direction of urban planning, and government and business improve their 'social license' by engaging closely with civil society.



3

YOUTH, FOOD + CLIMATE ACTION

This scenario describes a future where young people are educated, empowered and engaged in determining the future of food.

There is a strong 'ethic of care' in the practivism of young people, who value inclusiveness, diversity, decolonisation and wellbeing alongside decoupling food production and consumption from fossil fuels. Young people define solutions for ensuring healthy soil, water and air to protect

our climate, revitalise farming communities, and mobilise the next generation of farmers.

New models of governance are based on improved food and land affordability and excellent food knowledge, education and mentoring. This shift is driven by young people's collective power at the intersection of food justice and other issues, particularly climate movements.



4

TECHNOLOGY FOR THE PEOPLE

This scenario re-imagines who decides about agri-food technology, and how the food system is financed and regulated.

Here, food justice is achieved when technology and innovation are transformed into a common good, democratically controlled and contribute to fulfilling the rights of users, farmers and eaters everywhere. Just as the ecological and nutritional impacts of new foods must be

carefully weighed, questions such as who owns emerging technology, who benefits from its use, and who participates in decision making are important parts of public debate.

Innovation is developed with community input, and corporations are regulated more efficiently. By rethinking the current economic model, this future emphasises de-growth, circular economies, cooperation, democratisation, transparency and participation.



From local visions to food system change

The recent UN Food Systems Summit in 2021 highlighted the key role of food systems transformation in sustainable development, and the need to engage with civil society throughout this process. This is also reflected in the United Nations 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals, and especially in SDG#2 Zero Hunger which calls for a ‘fundamental transformation of the way we grow and eat food’.

Towards this goal, our findings show that the above Fair Food Futures are connected by 4 pathways to transformative action that can act as leverage points for policy change.

Decisions about the food system affect all our lives, but who makes these decisions, and how?

In constructing the 4 scenarios, we asked participants to consider questions of food systems governance: that is, the processes, rules, and structures that underlie decisions about how food is produced, distributed, and consumed.

We are particularly interested to examine the role of civil society actors – members of community food organisations, unaffiliated

with governments or corporations – who are often excluded from food system governance, both in Australia and globally.

A key question for policy making is How can community food networks influence the kind of wider paradigm shift towards food justice that sustainable food systems require?

According to UNRISD, what is needed is ‘transformative localisation’ – changing the economic, social and political structures that generate hunger, inequality and poverty at the local level in an inclusive, democratic and sustainable way.

1 Intersectional solidarity and care

This pathway commits to redressing past injustices and connecting food with wider issues such as housing, income, healthcare, gender equality and indigenous sovereignty. Policies should aim to extend care to a wide array of food system actors and social groups, as well as to non-human food system actors such as animals and ecological systems.

2 Food and rights for all

This pathway is based on legislating the Right to Food into national and state food policymaking and human rights instruments, and a redesign of governance processes to better facilitate concrete human rights outcomes.

3 Food systems as a common good

This pathway values land, air, water, soil, biodiversity and seeds for their role in ensuring the health and wellbeing of all. Food systems must look beyond markets, towards grassroots democracy where ordinary people can set the agenda, leading to significant changes in the way food is produced, distributed, and consumed.

4 Resilience beyond crisis

This pathway acknowledges that future crises under climate change are inevitable, and so food systems must provide a source of transformation. This requires a rapid shift to localising food production, distribution and consumption, redirecting financial profits to benefit local communities, and shifting governance processes to reflect long-term goals.



PATHWAYS TO TRANSFORMATIVE ACTION ON ZERO HUNGER

This project found that different futures are possible, with multiple scenarios available for reducing hunger and achieving food justice. These futures will be achieved by changing mindsets and practices to help communities and policy makers debate equitable pathways to achieve Zero Hunger, and help to improve policy participation from civil society.



Policy insights: Governing for food justice in Australia

We invite you to contribute to the next phase of **Fair Food Futures** by helping us to identify current challenges and opportunities in Australian food policy for translating the research findings into action.

Specifically, we ask you to consider:

- What are the barriers to policy action (across all levels of government) on fair and sustainable food systems in general? What are the barriers to greater participation by civil society in food policymaking?
 - What are the enablers in this space, including potential mechanisms for greater participation and collaboration between civil society and other stakeholders in shaping fairer food systems?
 - What are some concrete, immediate policy actions that could translate these Fair Food Future scenarios into action?
- Your insights will be compiled to contribute to the 2022 Global People's Summit 'Co-building and Eco-social World' in the lead-up to the 2022 UN High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, part of the Decade of Action to deliver the UN Sustainable Development Goals.



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