



The People's Food Plan

Food – along with water, and air – is the essence of life. So healthy food systems are needed to:

- **Feed all people well**
- **Look after all food producers**
- **Nurture the land and water from which food is produced**

Producing enough food has always been a challenge for the 10,000 years since humans settled and agriculture began. Year after year, farmers and seed savers gather and keep the best seeds and animals for sowing next season, creating the cornucopia of food we enjoy. But seed patents hijack this heritage.

Then along came the Haber-Bosch process to fix nitrogen, modern plant breeding and the Green Revolution. Farming now depends on inputs, especially of synthetic chemicals from fossil fuels - fertilizers, insect and weed killers, based on poison gas and munitions plants from the World Wars. Over the last 80 years higher food production enabled the human population to increase by over 300%.

Agriculture – the work of producing food – became industrialized and 'factory farming' dominated in many places. But grain surpluses now feed biofuel plants and animals in feedlots, not people directly. The sweeteners and emulsifiers that underpin the processed and fast food industries are also derived from grain.

More land is cleared and rural communities displaced in a global 'land and water grab' to keep the system expanding. Family farmers are deliberately squeezed to 'get big or get out'. For example, Australian dairy and grain farmer numbers have halved in the past decade. Thus, in industrialised food production and supply systems:

- Family farmers everywhere struggle to earn a decent living
- Food is more expensive and less affordable for many people
- A billion people, mostly rural women and children, are starving or malnourished
- A global pandemic of 400 million obese and diabetic people is spreading fast
- Agriculture and food production create around 33% of greenhouse gas emissions
- Industrialised agriculture is a major factor in the mass extinction of other species.
- Now the resources on which industrial farming depends are in sharp decline.

A transition to sustainable ecological farming systems is urgent, before present resource-intensive agriculture fails due to the end of cheap and accessible oil and phosphates, limited water and arable soils, and climate change. Sustainable low-input farms are key to permanently and securely feeding all.

'Business-as-usual' is not an option as most experts – including Olivier de Schutter, the UN's special rapporteur on food – agree. But 'more of the same' is what our Federal Government's National Food Plan will deliver.

Government consults vested commercial interests and focuses on extending the status quo, backing corporate profits by 'seizing new market opportunities', 'raising productivity and competitiveness', and 'boosting exports' – using a mining industry model.

Governments, corporate agri-business, the chemical industry, and big supermarket chains are shaping the Food Plan so they will benefit even more from the proposals. Their profits increase while human well-being, ecosystem integrity and access to local, fresh, safe & nutritious food are badly compromised.

Creating the People's Food Plan

The People's Food Plan process will be facilitated by the Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance, with allies and supporters around Australia, using a very different set of principles that include:

- Food is a basic human need so access to good, healthy food at all times for all people is a basic human right, which our Government is obliged to uphold
- Thriving rural communities and viable family farms are basic to a healthy food system
- Agriculture is impossible without healthy land and waterways so farmers must be supported in their role as environmental stewards caring for soils and landscapes
- Our prime agricultural lands need to be identified and protected from destruction by suburban sprawl, coal-seam gas mining, foreign ownership and control
- Sustainable agriculture for the future will largely be based around the principles of agro-ecology
- New technologies, such as genetic manipulation (GM), do no more than prop up the failing industrial systems
- GM patent-holders reap profits but GM has failed to deliver on promises of better sustainability, higher yields, etc.
- We urgently need diversification in our food distribution and retail sectors, to break the destructive stranglehold the supermarket duopoly has over many aspects of the food supply system
- Junk food and fast food is as great a threat to public health as tobacco so revisions of public policy are needed
- Free trade is not a cure-all for food security and prosperity as the Government claims because cheap food imports undermine our farmers' livelihoods

Food Sovereignty is our right, as people and as communities, to work together to decide

how our food and agricultural systems can be designed to be fair, sustainable and resilient. The People's Food Plan process is about citizens exercising our basic rights, to hold a democratic, inclusive conversation on food issues of fundamental importance to our well-being, and that of future generations.

These issues are far too important to 'let the market decide' as our governments propose. They must intervene on behalf of the public interest because markets are driving us to greater food insecurity.

Most Australians want a fair, sustainable and resilient food system and many are taking steps in our own lives to realise that goal. Millions grow some of their own food; keep chooks or a beehive; shop at a farmers' market; participate in a community or school garden; and want to buy, with confidence, Australian-grown, safe and healthy produce.

But the Federal Government's consultation on a National Food Plan offers little real public participation and is inaccessible to most people. The documents are overlong and unnecessarily technical, Government with industry chieftains have pre-set the agenda and many outcomes, before hearing from ordinary Australians, all with a stake in food.

The National Food Plan proceeds on the assumption that food is mainly a commodity for money-making and export. We disagree.

Now Australians must stand up together and send governments the very clear message that we want to be heard and our priorities adopted. The People's Food Plan process will involve ordinary Australians discussing together our values and priorities for the establishment of our new sustainable food system. Public forums will be held around the country and you are invited to participate.

For more information visit: <http://australian.foodsovereigntyalliance.org/>