26 April 2024

FOOD SECURE COMMUNITIES IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

SUMMARY PAPER

Purpose of this engagement

The Government of South Australia (through Preventive Health SA and the Department of Human Services) is wanting to better understand how people are experiencing food insecurity and what would help them to access enough safe and healthy food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences as well as their families'.
This is the second part of a two-stage project:

- The initial stage of the project, which was facilitated by the Centre for Social Impact (CSI) Flinders and guided by an external advisory group, included a review of the evidence and engagement with key stakeholders to discuss what best practice food systems in communities that experience high levels of food insecurity look like, and what South Australia could learn from these practices.

- The second stage aims to listen to the voices of people with lived experience of food insecurity in South Australia to understand what they need to help them to access enough safe and healthy food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences. The consultation stage will include a series of focused conversations with people who have lived experience of food insecurity. These conversations are being held in every region across South Australia, as well as broader community consultation via the YourSay platform.

On completion of the second stage, a summary and discussion paper will be presented to government to inform prioritisation of future action in this space.

Purpose of this summary paper

This summary paper has been prepared based on the work undertaken by the Centre for Social Impact, Flinders University during the first stage of this project. It provides some background for the two-stage project, including a summary of work already completed as part of the first stage of this project.

Context: food security

Access to healthy food is central to our health and wellbeing. When we cannot access adequate healthy food, this can result in obesity and diseases like diabetes and heart disease.

"Food security" exists when all people, at all times, can access sufficient, safe and healthy food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences.

We know that a lot of South Australians are experiencing food insecurity right now. In 2023, 16% of people surveyed though a South Australian survey, reported being food insecure (with or without hunger). Broader Australian data also tells us that for many people, food insecurity is a long-term issue (i.e. longer than 1 year).

Supporting the creation of alternative food systems that support **everyone** to get **healthy** and **culturally appropriate food** in a **dignified way** will help reduce the extent of chronic health conditions.

Definition of food security used in this project

Food security exists when all people, at all times, have regular and reliable physical, social and economic access to sufficient safe, nutritious and culturally relevant food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences. (HLPE, 2020)

Food security is supported by a system which also promotes ecological sustainability, adequate sanitation, health services and care. Being food secure also includes the assured ability to acquire acceptable, affordable foods in socially acceptable ways without resorting to charitable food supplies, scavenging, stealing and other coping strategies. (Anderson, 1990; Gallegos et al., 2023; USDA, 2022)

The concept of food security has evolved over recent years to recognise the centrality of agency and sustainability. Key agencies of the United Nations body (High level panel of experts on food security and nutrition, Committee on World Food Security, Food and Agriculture Organisation) describe food security as having 6 dimensions (HLPE, 2020): availability, access, utilisation, agency, sustainability and stability (Table 1).

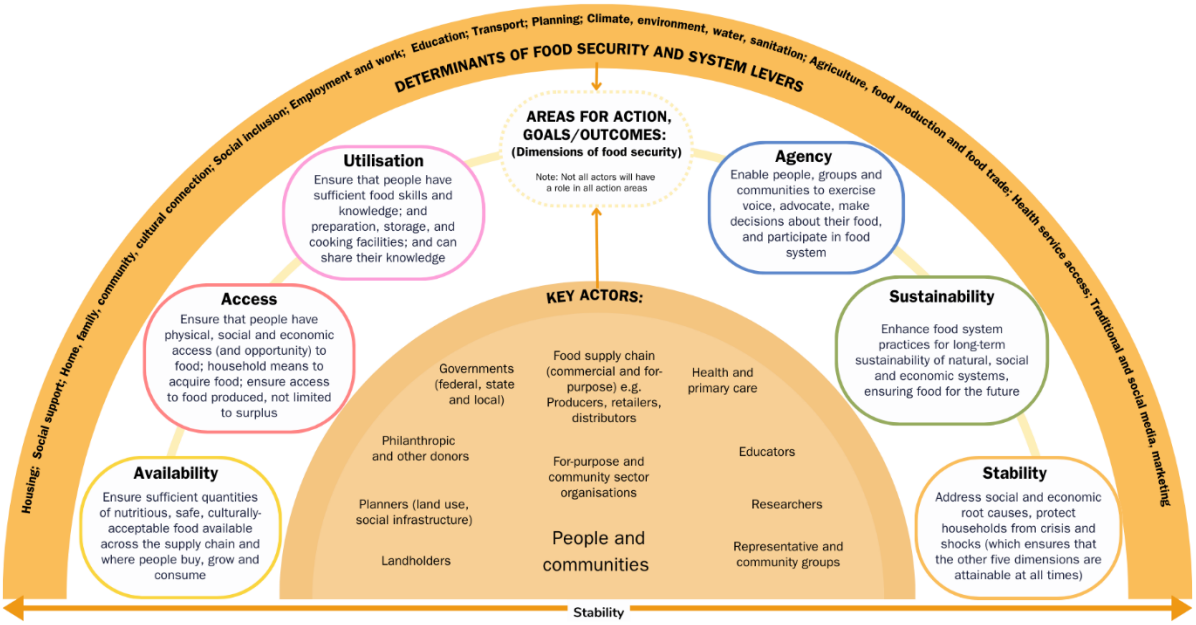
Table 1. Six dimensions of food security, adapted from the UN body on World Food security (HLPE, FAO)

Availability	People have sufficient quantity and quality of food available, supplied through domestic production or imports.
Access	People have both physical and economic access to food (personal or household financial means)
Utilisation	People have appropriate food skills, knowledge, and preparation/cooking facilities
Agency	People or groups have the capacity to act independently, to make decisions about their food, and to engage in policy processes that shape food systems
Sustainability	Food system practices that contribute to long-term regeneration of natural, social and economic systems, ensuring the food needs of the present generations are met without compromising needs of future generations
Stability	People are protected from crisis and shocks, which ensures the other dimensions are attainable at all times

Context: food system

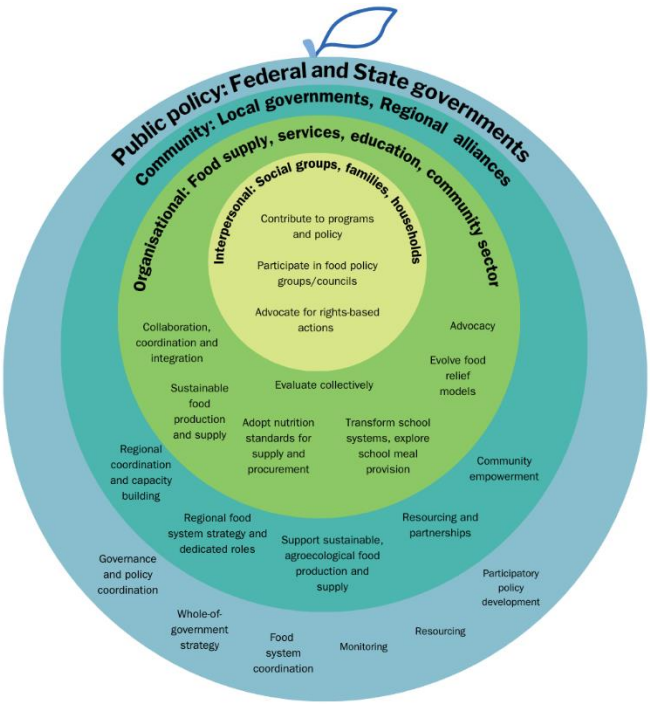
The Centre for Social Impact has created a simplified system model based on the evidence and input of stakeholders during the first stage of the project to demonstrate the elements of a secure food system for communities experiencing food insecurity (Diagram 1). The model shows the main determinants, dimensions, and key actors in a secure food system for communities experiencing food insecurity but does not capture system interdependencies.

Diagram 1: the elements of a secure food system for communities experiencing food insecurity



Collaboration across the public and for-purpose sectors, and across civil society can support the creation of more secure food system, which will reduce and prevent food insecurity and financial precarity. Diagram 2, prepared by the Centre for Social Impact, shows the key actions that are recommended for public policy, for regional and local governments, for food supply, social service, education, for-profit and community organisations and for individuals, groups and households. The evidence suggests that to have the greatest impact, collective action is required from multiple actors at all levels.

Diagram 1: Key actions recommended for key actors to create a secure food system



The evidence review

A rapid evidence review, *Food Secure Communities in South Australia - An evidence summary to support food security across food and social systems* (Lindberg & Ribeiro de Melo, 2023), was prepared by independent experts to help understand what equitable, sustainable, nutritious and secure food systems look like and what South Australia could learn from these models. (See Attachment A for full Literature Review)

The review focused on communities that are at risk of, or are experiencing, high levels of food insecurity. The four research questions below were determined in collaboration with the government steering committee and guided the rapid review:

- RQ1: Who is food insecure in SA and what is the impact of food insecurity on population health?

- RQ2: What are the optimal practices for creating secure food systems for communities experiencing food insecurity? (including evidence of lived experience of food insecurity, and community engagement in any identified practices)
- RQ3: What are the overarching policy/legislative frameworks that achieve secure food systems for communities experiencing food insecurity?
- RQ4: Who are the key actors and what are their optimal roles in secure food systems for communities experiencing food insecurity? Include the food relief sector as well as local, state and commonwealth government departments.

The evidence review identified 37 actions that could potentially support Food Secure Communities in South Australia. Table 2 summarises and categorises these actions under the six dimensions of food security.

Table 2: Potential actions identified through the evidence review

Food access

	Action as described in the evidence review (research, practice and lived experience)
Physical	Localised community/social supermarkets, meal and shop-like programs that support access to affordable dignified food and social inclusion (MUFPP, 2015; Pettman, 2019)
	Mobile fresh food markets (Best & Johnson, 2016; Booth et al., 2023)
	Adequate public transport to allow food purchasing and food delivery services (Booth et al., 2023; Brochier et al., 2022)
	Formal national guidelines for food assistance/emergency relief as part of disaster management (Pollard et al., 2021)
	Community led multi-sector participatory approach to food systems in remote Indigenous contexts (Rogers et al., 2018)*
Economic	Improve dignified access to fresh and healthy emergency food (Bazerghi et al., 2016)
	Coordinated and collaborative approaches to food relief (VFSaFSWG, 2022)
	Evidence-informed food relief/ diasaster management responses using strategic nutrition/food security planning tools (Pollard et al., 2021)
	Produce prescriptions for communities at increased risk, e.g. pregnant women (Merchant et al., 2023)

	Protection of fruit and vegetables from the Goods and Services Tax
	Price discounts for healthier foods in remote stores (McKay & Godrich, 2021; Yii et al., 2019)

Availability

Action as described in the evidence review (research, practice and lived experience)
Healthy, sustainable and regional procurement approaches in institutional settings (MUFPP, 2015)
Local food growing and sharing networks and grassroots activities (MUFPP, 2015; Sonnino & Hanmer, 2016)
Strengthen local and regional food systems by creating a Local Food Investment Fund to grow capacity, improve coordination and drive efficiencies in local food infrastructure (Bowden, 2020)
Provision of free school meals (Chote et al., 2022; Cohen et al., 2021; Jose et al., 2020; Manson et al., 2022)
Affordable farmers markets (Ziso et al., 2022)
Mapping and monitoring of Australia's food supply against current and future dietary needs (Ridoutt et al., 2017)
Retail settings increase nutritious food quality and variety, availability and promotion (Yii et al., 2019)
Audit local food environments to determine availability, price and quality of nutritious foods (Whelan et al., 2018)

Utilisation

Action as described in the evidence review (research, practice and lived experience)	
Food system-related learning and skill development (MUFPP, 2015)	Food and nutrition literacy
	Employment training
	Leadership
Food education in curriculum, capacity building and community development formats (Pettman, 2022; VFSaFSWG, 2022)	

Tailored nutrition education for people receiving government assistance (e.g., Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, USA (Atoloye et al., 2021)) **and/or education in settings that provide affordable/low-cost/free food** (West et al., 2020; Ziso et al., 2022)

Agency

Consumers of community food programs/emergency relief guide service provision standards (WACOSS, 2019)

Participatory approaches to policy, programming and research with community members and/or stakeholder organisations to support food security (Akbar et al., 2022; Atkey et al., 2016; Browne et al., 2017; Ferguson et al., 2023; Kim et al., 2020; Tuckett et al., 2022)

Food policy councils organising community-based responses to multiple food system issues (Boden & Hoover, 2018; Godrich et al., 2023; Palmer et al., 2020)

Kitchen incubator social enterprises that support food entrepreneurs (at increased risk of food insecurity) to grow and formalise food businesses (Elkharouf et al., 2021)

New: **Understanding what food provision is for different cultural groups, redesign the system so that it is less westernised^**

New: **Advocacy to change/restrict advertising of unhealthy commodities^**

Sustainability

The creation of sustainable urban food systems and urban agriculture (Audate et al., 2019; Government of SA, 2017)

Support the transition to regenerative farming practices to enhance ecological function and build resilience by proactively supporting and resourcing agroecological solutions (VFSaFSWG, 2022)

Diversity supported in the food system (e.g., diverse in the geographic locations, short as well as long supply chains, small as well as large scale producers and community as well as commercial production) (Carey & Clarke, 2020)

New: **Reduce/avoid food waste^**

Stability

Improve employment standards for all within the food and agriculture sector (MUFPP, 2015)
Income support increases for families with children shown to reduce risks for severe food insecurity (Brown & Tarasuk, 2019)
Increased frequency of income support (Booth et al., 2023)
One-off increase to the amount of income support among households on social assistance (Li et al., 2016)
Address structural racism and discrimination (this is associated with higher odds of food insecurity) (Brochier et al., 2022)
Policies that increase minimum wage, reduce taxes, and create jobs among households with children (Men et al., 2021)
Aged-pensions (more generous than other benefit types, food insecurity reduces when people become eligible) (Loopstra, 2018; Temple et al., 2019)
Housing/ mortgage policies set up to be protective of food insecurity even during crisis (McIntyre et al., 2017)

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