

Policy and plans

Incorporate food security into council policy and plans

Information Sheet Series: Ten ways local government can act on food security



What is Food for All?

VicHealth's Food for All program funded Victorian local governments to take a lead in addressing the problem of food insecurity by improving access to healthy food. Councils developed practical and long-lasting strategies to tackle food insecurity, particularly within disadvantaged communities.

This information sheet is one in a series of ten, designed to assist local government in advancing a food security agenda.

Integrating food security into Council policy and planning is vital to ensure food security is firmly on the council agenda and seen as a legitimate area for local government action. This process ensures that food security is dealt with systematically and proactively over the long term rather than opportunistically and reactively over the short term.

Integration helps to get food security accepted as an issue of relevance to all council activity across business development, infrastructure, land use planning, environmental sustainability and human services. Once food security is embedded in major policy documents it becomes subject to reporting, action planning and assessment, helping to protect its status as an important area of investment.

How can local government implement this recommendation?

At the beginning of the Food for All program, the process of integrating food security into council policy and planning had to start with broad-based awareness raising among councillors and staff.

Now that local government is more familiar with the concept of food security, there may be less groundwork needed.

Actions that local government can take to incorporate food security into council policy and plans include the following:

- Raise the profile of food security in Council and in the community. To achieve this, Council can:
 - develop a local evidence document and use it as a tool for education and advocacy (See information sheet 'Building the local picture')
 - develop and run internal activities, seminars, information sessions and workshops with council staff to inform and engage staff across all areas
 - profile food security at local festivals, forums, and public events. Get food security into council communications and the local media.

For more information about VicHealth's work on food security go to www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/foodforall

- Identify existing opportunities to incorporate food security into policy or plans. Focus on a major policy such as the Council or City Plan, the Municipal Public Health Plan (commonly known as the Health and Wellbeing Plan), and the Municipal Strategic Statement. The council policy or plan doesn't need to explicitly state the term 'food security'. It can be mentioned as a commitment to increasing access to nutritious affordable food, promoting home grown and local food production, support for implementing healthy eating programs and policies, or ensuring unrestricted access to healthy food.
- Ideally, departments within councils should consider food security in their planning. Previous groundwork becomes vital at this stage; if people are engaged across Council in the evidence development process, they are more likely to appreciate the importance of food security and incorporate it into planning in their area.
- Look for ways to emphasise the synergy between food security and other objectives; for example sustainability, peak oil, social justice or human rights.
- Ensure the policy has an accompanying action plan as well as broad statements about the importance of food security.
- Some actions may be more effective in partnership with local agencies. Council can support local community services or business organisations to adopt food security into their strategic priorities and their action planning. Successful examples include relationships with primary care partnerships, community health services and their integrated health promotion plans, local business association plans, local greenhouse gas or climate change groups.

Food for All program examples

Maribyrnong City Council has worked extensively to promote and embed food security as an important local issue. The council has done this by:

- including other relevant issues in their Municipal Strategic Statement such as accessible transport, walkability to activity centres, encouraging rooftop gardens in multi-level developments to provide opportunities for green spaces and food growing
- developing a discreet Food Security Policy early in the Food for All project. Additionally, Council's Peak Oil Policy and Action Plan has a specific section on food security.

Wodonga Council adopted many innovative ways of getting local food security issues on the table. Strategies included:

- developing draft Community Gardening Policy and Guidelines, a Community Gardens Ten Year Concept Plan and a community garden pilot program
- developing guidelines to assist developers embed food security principles into new developments.

View the *Food for All* micro-movies at www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/foodforall

Further reading

La Table de concertation sur la faim, et le développement sociale de Montreal Metropolitain. 2004. Components for a policy on food security.

New South Wales Department of Health 2009. *Healthy Urban Development Checklist: A guide for health services when commenting on development policies, plans and proposals*.

Slade C 2009. *The role of local government in food security: A literature review. Prepared for the City of Banyule and the City of Darebin* by La Trobe University, Community Planning and Development Program.

South Sydney City Council 1995. *What's eating South Sydney? A policy for a safe, affordable, accessible and nutritious food supply in South Sydney*.

Victorian Health Promotion Foundation 2008. *Food for All How local government is improving access to nutritious food*. See pages 10–11 on the development of the Frankston Municipal Public Health Plan.

Victorian Local Governance Association 2009. *Integrating Land Use Planning and Community Food Security: A new agenda for government to deliver on sustainability, economic growth and social justice*. La Trobe University, Community Planning and Development Program.

See also:

Hobsons Bay food security policy. Visit www.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au

Maribyrnong City Council Peak Oil Policy and Peak Oil Action Plan. Visit www.maribyrnong.vic.gov.au

The City of Darebin Climate Change and Peak Oil Adaptation Plan 2010. Visit www.darebin.vic.gov.au