# THE COMMUNITY GROCER

## AN IMPACT EVALUATION OF CARLTON AND FAWKNER MARKETS

The Community Grocer aims to improve food security and community for people living in low income areas by increasing their access to healthy, affordable and fresh food.

70% live within 1km



visit weekly

are food insecure

105  $\approx$ customers a week per market

276 total partnerships

49% 50%

86% 📧

are on a low income

nationalities

515KG of produce sold per week per market

**\$15.1** 

average spend per week

# FOOD INSECURITY

## ACCESS 🝼

- Access to affordable produce on a weekly basis, rather than waiting until a crisis point
- Strategic market location increases accessibility
- "Easy access, no dramas" Fawkner Customer

## AFFORDABILITY 🔏



- 37.2% cheaper than local green grocers and supermarkets
- "[The market is] situated in an area where typically produce is pretty expensive" -Volunteer Carlton

# **UTILISATION**

- The produce was reported to be of high quality
- "It lasts longer in my fridge because it is so fresh" - Carlton Customer
- "I've learnt a lot of new recipes" Carlton Customer

## **AVAILIBILITY**



- An average of 17 fruits and 44 vegetables available
- "We are responsive to community needs..." -Market Manager Fawkner

# **NUTRITIONALLY ADEQUATE**

- -82% have increased their fruit and vegetable intake
- "There's a good choice for families" Carlton Primary School Teacher

# SOCIAL INCLUSION

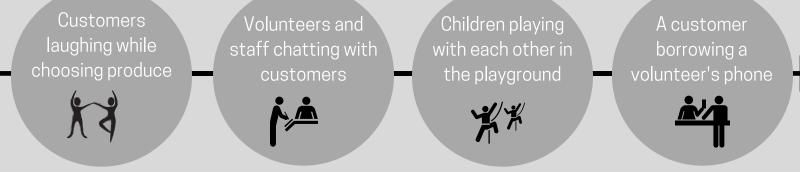
The Community Grocer market facilitates:

- Frequent engagement
- Cultural diversity
- A sense of belonging

91% feel a sense of community

- "Good for community"
- "Buzzing and a place to catch up with friends"
- "It's really important"

## AN AVERAGE OF 4 INTERACTIONS WERE OBSERVED PER CUSTOMER. THESE INCLUDED:



"The market relies on its customers, just as the customers rely on the market. It's a mutual and respectful relationship" - General Manager

# VOLUNTEERS

## SKILL DEVELOPMENT

- Improved English speaking skills
- "Since volunteering [here] my English has improved" Carlton Volunteer
- Increased food knowledge
- "I learned how to chop up vegetables and cook them for the BBQ" Fawkner Volunteer
- Increased self-esteem
- "Learning things here has built my confidence" Fawkner Volunteer

## **SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT**



- Social opportunities for volunteers
- "I come here for a chat" Carlton Volunteer
- "I have met lots of new people... It's a good social thing to do" Carlton Volunteer
- "It's a platform for me" Carlton Volunteer

## **COMMUNITY**



- Contributing to the community and getting involved
- "It's helping the community" Carlton Volunteer
- "I just wanted to get more involved with my community" Carlton Volunteer

## **SUCCESS STORY...**

A Fawkner volunteer began working at the market shortly after arriving in Australia. The market helped her to learn English in addition to building her confidence in areas such as customer service and using the cash register. Her food knowledge expanded and she learned new recipes. Since the market, she has gone on to other volunteer opportunities, including helping at a community leadership program and working at the school canteen of the local Primary School. She has also recently began studying her diploma of Early Childhood and Education Support.

# IT'S MORE THAN JUST A MARKET...



## WHAT DOES THE MARKET MEAN TO YOU?

"I have a toddler, so it is perfect for my weekly schedule. Thank you:)" "Its like a big family as we communicate with people. Everyone is friendly and helpful"

"I can catch up with my friends, so I am very happy" "Its good, before I had to travel far away but now I can access [fruit and vegetables] easily and quickly"













#### **Supporting Document - An Impact Evaluation**

Romy Sacks, Lori Braun, Georgia Feben, Sofia Gill

This is a supporting document for the infographic and intended for The Community Grocer and Merri Health.

#### Methods

An impact evaluation was performed to explore the influence of The Community Grocer on food insecurity, social connection and volunteer skill development. Multiple methods were utilised throughout the seven-week period. A qualitative and quantitative approach was employed in efforts to gain robust information from multiple perspectives. Drawing upon transitional stories, the primary aim was to explore the perspectives of market shoppers, the experiences of volunteers and perceptions of key partners.

10 impact indicators were established based on pre-existing process indicators which were developed by The Community Grocer (see Appendix 1). The original indicators were refined to reflect the key areas of interest for this project. They formed the basis of data collection; aiming to address the underlying determinants of food insecurity, social connectedness and volunteer skill development. This approach was imperative to ensure that results were measurable, relevant and transferable between the markets and replicable for future work. Moreover, the indicators provided a medium for addressing the complexities involved with food insecurity and social inclusion.

Data collection took place during Carlton and Fawkner Community Grocer Markets. The qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews, observational studies and focus groups, as shown in Table 1. Two focus groups, coordinated by Merri Health, were conducted with key partners of the organisation. Focus groups were recorded and subsequently transcribed. They were then coded into common themes, namely; quality, affordable, convenient, social, well-being, food insecurity, jobs skills, support system. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with volunteers and customers during market hours. Open ended interview questions were developed, which are detailed in Appendix 2. Interviews were conducted and recorded over a two week period at Fawkner Leisure Centre, Merri Health Coburg and Carlton Community Grocer. Ethics approval was obtained from Monash University Ethics Committee. Additionally, observational studies were conducted, where subjects were identified and observed to explore their shopping habits and social interactions, over a 3 hour period at each market (see Appendix 3).

A phenomenological framework was employed to attain insights into personal experiences, situations and stories. Semi-structured interviews and conversations were chosen to allow for flexible, unintimidating and open-ended conversational flow; encapsulating in-depth participant responses. This platform was appropriate for the majority of community members, due to the sensitivities of the issues relating to our research. In addition, the focus groups had the capacity to reach a large number of participants which was effective given the time constraints of the project. This approach built a comprehensive and overarching understanding of community and attempted to capture expressive data in a real life setting.

The quantitative data was collected through a survey, price comparison and The Community Grocer Market Log. The cross sectional survey was carried out at both markets, over a one week period. 14 questions were produced that addressed demographics, opinions and shopping habits of customers (see Appendix 4). In addition to providing valuable information, the survey provides a baseline for future evaluation. [1] Participants that were English speaking and willing to participate took part in the survey. Fresh produce was provided as an incentive for respondents, in efforts to increase participation rates. Income ranges and living arrangements were measured via the quantitative survey. Centrelink low income supplement ranges were utilised to quantify low income; a disposable income per week of <\$575 for singles, \$575-865 for couples and \$865-1153 for singles/couples with a dependent child were considered low income. [2] The collated data was recorded into Survey Monkey for analysis. [3] The Market log was used to determine average number of customers per week, produce sold (kg) per week and average spend (as seen in Appendix 5).

A price comparison was conducted in an effort to measure the affordability of The Community Grocer (see Appendix 6). Literature suggests that a price comparison serves as an effective platform to evaluate the affordability of food. [4] The Victorian Healthy Food Basket (VHFB) was utilised as a tool for comparison; specifically the fresh fruit and vegetable components. A total of 10 items (3 fruits and 7 vegetables) were explored. A 1km radius was electronically mapped out and all fruit and vegetables vendors were identified (total of 6). Following this, the prices of the 10 items were manually recorded from respective vendors. Additionally, the price list from each market was obtained. Subsequently, a spreadsheet was formulated to calculate the mean prices of the items from the markets and surrounding vendors. The mean difference was calculated, which enabled an overall cost comparison to be carried out. The VHFB was utilised as it reflects the fruit and vegetable intakes of typical Victorian households, and therefore relevant for a price comparison conducted within Victoria. Moreover, it is widely established and thus able to be transferred for future evaluations.

The major findings were communicated in the form of an infographic. Infographics provide an effective platform to convey qualitative and quantitative data in a visual and reader-friendly format.

Table 1. Methods

Data Collection	Subjects
Observational Studies (n=25)	- Market shoppers
Quantitative survey (n=43)	- Market shoppers
Focus Group (n=7)	<ul> <li>Merri Health Physiotherapist</li> <li>Fawkner Market manager</li> <li>Fawkner Market assistant</li> <li>Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY) representative</li> <li>Diabetes educator at Merri Health</li> <li>Merri Health financial advisor</li> <li>Merri Heath Volunteer coordinator</li> </ul>
Semi-structured interviews (n=19)	<ul> <li>Carlton Primary School teacher</li> <li>Fawkner Community House representative</li> <li>Open Table Fawkner representative</li> <li>General Manager of The Community Grocer</li> <li>Volunteers (n=9)</li> <li>Market customers (n=6)</li> </ul>
Price comparison (n= 8)	<ul> <li>Carlton Community Grocer</li> <li>Carlton Woolworths</li> <li>Carlton Foodworks</li> <li>Carlton Green Grocer (First Choice fruit and vegetable supplies)</li> <li>Carlton Convenience Grocer</li> <li>Fawkner Community Grocer</li> <li>Fawkner IGA</li> <li>Fawkner Fresh Green Grocer</li> </ul>

### Discussion

The Community Grocer is an innovative initiative that provides fresh fruit and vegetables to Victoria's most vulnerable, and at current, no impact evaluation has been conducted. Evaluations are a crucial component of any public health intervention to determine areas for improvement and validate success. [5] As The Community Grocer markets have not been evaluated to date, it is considered a priority for the organisation.

#### Food insecurity:

A primary aim of this research was to determine whether The Community Grocer was having an impact on food insecurity. Affordability in particular was noted as an ambiguous determinant and was therefore reviewed in more depth. Affordability is subjective in nature, due to the different perceptions and priorities of individuals. As a result, it was concluded that a cost comparison was the most effective platform to evaluate the affordability of food. [4] On average, the Fawkner and Carlton Community Grocers are approximately 37. 2% cheaper for fresh produce than surrounding vendors, thus rendering it a lower-cost option for shoppers. The survey identified that 86% of customers are low income earners, signifying the necessity for low cost options. Research has suggested that low income families need to spend approximately 30% of their household income on food in order to consume a nutritionally adequate diet, compared to 10% for high income earners. [8]

Moreover, due to the rigid nature of utilities and housing costs, money for food is often a secondary priority. As a result of this, low income households are more likely to displace money for food, and may choose lower cost, energy dense options. [6] Importantly, food security does not only refer to the quantity of food consumed, but also the nutritional quality. [6,7] The design of the Community Grocer is of benefit to customers as it provides affordable produce which aims to support a nutritionally adequate diet. This was confirmed by our results; 82% of respondents had increased their fruit and vegetable intake.

#### Social Inclusion:

Our findings determined that 91% of participants felt a sense of community and social connectedness at the market. This aligns with the organisation's assumption that the market facilitate social engagement. Social inclusion is a complex issue to measure and therefore, various methods were utilised to gain a comprehensive understanding of this concept. It is important to note that individuals that are socially isolated are not likely to be accessing the market, which questions the credibility of our findings.

#### Volunteers:

Our results indicated that key skills developed by volunteers included customer service procedures, retail procedures (i.e. using cash registers), increased food knowledge and English speaking ability. This aligns with academic research which suggests that volunteering is beneficial to increase employment opportunities, develop a higher sense of self-confidence and improve speaking skills. [9] Our results revealed that there were on average 17 different nationalities present at the market, highlighting the multiculturalism and diversity that exists within the communities. Skill development, a sense of belonging and English speaking skills is particularly important for immigrants, due to the barriers often faced upon arrival to a new country. [9]

#### Carlton and Fawkner differences

Whilst The Community Grocer is an established social enterprise, it is important to acknowledge that differences existed between the two markets that were researched. Due to the different location sites, affiliations and communities, each market has their own essence and originality.

It was observed that the majority of customers at the Fawkner market attended primarily to purchase fruit and vegetables, with a lesser focus on social interactions. Unsold left-over produce from the market was donated to a local cafe that aims to support people in need of food relief. Additionally, the volunteers at Fawkner receive comprehensive training through Merri Health.

Conversely, it was observed that the Carlton market facilitated a greater sense of community and engagement. Customers often spent longer periods of time at the market; conversing and interacting with others, helping the volunteers and supervising children at the playground. Each volunteer was given a fruit and vegetable box as an appreciation of their assistance at the market. Additionally, it was discovered that Carlton has a payback system; allowing customers to pay for the cost of their produce at another point in time if required. The Carlton site is also a drop off point for SecondBite.

#### **Limitations**

Whilst we intended to limit bias and errors throughout our research, it is apparent that limitations still exist. It is likely that there was an underrepresentation of non-english speakers throughout data collection, due to language barriers. Additionally, individuals that were not present at the market during the data collection phase were not analysed, indicating selection bias. There was an inconsistency in the survey template between the two markets. There were several questions that were

added to the original survey during the data collection phase. Therefore, the results of specific questions may not be representative of the target population (refer to question 10, 12 and 14 in appendix 4). Moreover, the results from the qualitative data may have been limited due to the inexperience of the researchers. Specifically, the ability to thematically code and synthesise the qualitative results appropriately. Additionally, the busy nature of the market and the workload of staff members may have impacted on the depth of responses, due to time constraints. More generally, the sensitive nature of food insecurity may have impacted on the accuracy of results. [6,10] Therefore, social desirability bias may have occurred and as a result, limited our capacity to quantify and measure food insecurity.

#### Recommendations

Efforts should be directed towards capturing the individuals that do not attend the market in respective communities. Specifically, further research should be conducted to explore the underlying reasons and barriers that inhibit participation; such as individual, social, economic, environmental and cultural influences. This could be conducted through door knocking and further connections and partnerships with local community services. As a result, this will aid in improving the reach of the market, and ultimately enhance the impacts on food security, social inclusion and job skill development for volunteers.

Moreover, strategies could be used to encourage other Local Government areas to employ the Community Grocer's social enterprise model. Strategies may include presenting data at public health conferences, submitting publications or writing to local governments. Due to The Community Grocer's innovative approach, its' business model is likely to be of interest for other stakeholders in the public health arena.

The Community Grocer should focus on increasing volunteer participation rates of local residents within the community. This strategy should be a high priority for future sustainability of the organisation; as it promotes capacity building, community development, empowerment and ownership, as well as increased self-confidence and skill development. [11]

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## 1. Impact indicators

Impact Indicators	Target	Methods	Question
Connectedness     Diversity	5 CALD groups present at market	Survey	What is your cultural background?
· Additional services and information provided	>10 complementary services per annum	Partners	What was the impact on the partnership with the Community Grocer?
· Social interactions	>3 interactions per market	Observations and interview questions	Can you tell me a little bit about why you come to the market?
2. Food security · Access	1km radius from market	Survey	Do you live within 1km? How long did it take you to get here? How did you get here?
	Provide >10 people with free BBQ meal per market	Observation, survey	Do you come to the market to shop, shop and eat or just eat?
	> 3 visits every month	Survey	How many times per month do you visit the market?
- Availability	~70 varieties of fruit and vegetable available per week  Responsive to cultural needs	Market log	What types of fruit and vegetables are culturally appropriate for this community? Do you order them in regularly?

· Nutritionally adequate	Eating more fruit and vegetables	Survey	Are you eating more fruit and vegetables as a result of the market?
· Affordability	20% cheaper than local fruit and vegetable retailers	Price comparison with vendors within 1km radius using HFB items	
· Utilisation	Quality	Survey and interviews	What does the market mean to you?
3. Volunteers • Participation	> 50% local residents	Observation, market log, interview with market managers	Why is it important to have local residents working as a volunteer?
<ul> <li>Skill development and employability</li> <li>Customer service</li> <li>Financial literacy</li> <li>F&amp;V knowledge</li> </ul>		Interview/focus groups	Ask about skills learnt, valuable experiences, challenges and implications for future

### 2. Interview & focus group questions

### Partners interviewed at Fawkner

- Could you please describe your involvement or role within the Community Grocer?

- What do you believe are the major contributing factors to food insecurity within this population? (income, social networks, isolation, education, access, living and working conditions, unemployment, drug and alcohol abuse, cultural background, literacy)
- Could you describe your involvement with the community grocer and its' shoppers?
- The markets are about improving food security specifically increasing access to affordable fresh fruit and vegetables in a relaxed environment that encourages social interactions. Can you share your thoughts on the market's capacity to achieve this? Can you think of any examples?
- What changes have you noticed within community since the commencement of the market?
   EG better health, social connectedness, increased or decreased reliance on community services.
- Have you seen any beneficial change/outcomes in shoppers?

  Have you heard any powerful experiences of how the market has impacted people?
- Do you find you have more access to clients as a result of the market? If so, how?
- Are there any areas that you have noticed that need improvement/ any recommendations?
- What are your thoughts on the financial sustainability of the market?
- Do you believe it is an effective strategy to address food insecurity

#### Carlton Market Managers

- The markets are about improving food security specifically increasing access to affordable fresh fruit and vegetables in a relaxed environment that encourages social interactions. Can you share your thoughts on the market's capacity to achieve this?
- As you have first hand experience, have you met any customers that have told you powerful stories that indicate an improvement in food security or social inclusion?
- Could you describe the impact of the CG in terms of job skill development for volunteers?
- Have you heard of any or know any volunteers that have found employment following The Community Grocer? How about volunteer retainment?
- Could you describe the effect that the complimentary services have had on the market?
- Do you have any suggestions for improvements to the market? Maybe on how it could run more efficiently? Or perhaps how it could reach out to more people? Do you think the market effectively addresses food insecurity?

#### General manager of The Community Grocer

- The market aims to increase food security and social connectedness could you share your thoughts on the market's capacity to achieve this?
- Could you describe the effect that the complimentary services have on the market?
- Are they any powerful experiences of how the market has impacted people?
- What are your thoughts on the BBQ and food relief?
- Could you describe the impact for local residents who volunteer?
- Have there been any negative experiences/challenges that you have encountered?
- Opinion of sustainability of the market?
- Key areas for improvement/future development?

#### **Volunteers**

- How long have you been volunteering here for?
- Why did you decide to volunteer here? How did you find out about this?
- What skills have you learnt? Can you list some examples of how you have demonstrated this?
- What effect have these new skills had for you?
- Have you had any negative experiences? How did you overcome them?
- Do you meet many people on the job? How do you find interacting with the customers? Have you seen any long-term changes in customers?
- Have you applied for any jobs/helped you get any jobs?
- Will this help you in future? How?

#### Fawkner and Carlton customers

- Could you tell me a little bit about why you come to the market?
- How long have you been coming to the market for?
- Could you describe the atmosphere at the market?
- Do you feel part of the community at the market? Can you think of any examples?
- Have you met more people because of the market? So do your friends shop at the market?
- How has the market influence your life?
- Has the market influenced your food consumption? Could you describe how?
- If you don't come to the market, how will this impact your food intake/shopping?
- Do you visit any other food shops during the week as well as the market? What do you mainly buy from them?
- Have you had any market experiences that have stood out?
- Do you know people that don't shop at the market and why they don't?
- What do you think will help to improve the market?
- Do you have a meal why or why not? Does it comfort you to know that there is food available at the BBQ each week?

#### 3. Observational template

Aim: obtain an understanding of social inclusion and interaction and get an overall feeling of the social vibe of the market.

Locate an individual and follow their interactions

How many people they interact with:	
Types of interactions:	
Other observations:	
- Do they have kids playing nearby?	
- Do they hang around once they have made their purchases to chat?	
- How many people have they come to the market with?	
Notes/observations:	

## 4. Community Grocer Survey



**The Community Grocer Survey** 

Thank you for taking the time to fill out our survey. All responses are completely confidential and contribute to improving the market.

Please 1	tick the most appropri	ate response:			
1. In the more?	e last 12 months, were	e there any times	s that you ran out of	f food and couldn't affor	d to buy
	Yes				
	No				
	Don't know				
0	Don't want to answe	r			
2. If yo	u answered yes to que	estion 1, how oft	en would this happ	en?	
	Weekly				
	Fortnightly				
	Once per month				
	Less than once per n	nonth			
	Don't know				
3. How	far away from the ma Less than 1 km More than 1 km	arket do you live	?		
4. How	do you usually get to	the market? (Plo	ease circle)		
Bus	Train	Walk	Cycle	Drive	Other
5. How	long does it usually t	ake you to get to	the market?		
	Less than 10 minutes	S			
	10 - 20 minutes				

		Longer than 20 minutes
6.	Wha	t is your nationality and first language?
7.	How	many times each month do you usually visit the market? (Please circle)
1		2 3 4
	What	do you live with?  Alone With partner With partner and children With children only Other  t is your household income per week? Less than \$575 \$575-865 \$865-1150 More than \$1150 Prefer not to say
		proximately how much is your household spending on food per week (including take-away, arket, grocer, restaurant)?
	<u> </u>	< \$50 \$50- \$100

		\$100-\$200
		\$200-\$300
		>\$300
11.	Wh	en you come to the market do you usually eat from the BBQ?
		No, just shop
		Yes, shop and eat
		Yes, just come to eat
12.	Do	you think your intake of fruit and vegetables has increased since the market?
		Yes
		No
13.	Do	you feel a sense of community and inclusion at the market?
		Yes
		No
14.	Wh	at does The Community Grocer mean to you?
Tha	nk y	you for filling out the survey!

### 5a. Calculation of average number of customers that visit the market

- Calculate the average number of customers for each market between January and March 2017, using the market log
- Jan (n = 90), Feb (n=109), Mar (n=110)

• Therefore average per week =  $\sim 105$  customers

#### 5b. Calculation of average volume produce sold at market

- Used pricing document (last updated May 12, 2017) to calculate the weight of produce ordered for the market (using date 12/05/2017)
- Using avocado weight of 159g, Corn weight of 163g, cos lettuce weight of 49g, kale weight of 67g, lime weight of 49g, coriander weight of 40g, spinach weight of 340g to calculate volume per kg

#### 5c. Average spend per customer per week

- The average number of customers was calculated, see above (appendix 5a)
- The average total sales (~\$1,596.00) was calculated in the using the price check tab and calculated from January to March 2017
- Finally, the total sales divided by the average number of customers provide the final value of ~\$15.12.

#### 6a. Raw price list

Items	Price per kg (\$) for each retailer

Items listed in Victorian Healthy Food Basket	Fawkner Community Grocer	IGA Bonwick St Fawkner	Fawkner Fresh Bonwick St	Carlton Commun ity Grocer	Foodworks Carlton	First Choice Fruit & Veg Carlton	Convenience Store Grocers Carlton	Woolworths Carlton
Apples Oranges Bananas Tomatoes Potatoes Pumpkin Cabbage Lettuce* Carrots Onions	2.90 2.30 1.90 5.59 1.20 1.69 3.24 1.50 1.90	2.49 2.99 2.99 8.99 1.49 1.99 1.49 3.99 1.99 2.99	2.97 7.49 1.99 6.49 2.97 3.99 3.49 1.49 2.49	2.49 1.99 2.49 4.99 1.19 1.69 3.60 1.00 1.99 0.99	3.99 2.99 1.99 4.99 1.99 2.49 N/A 3.85 2.48 3.49	2.99 7.99 4.50 4.99 4.99 3.99 5.22 3.00 2.99 3.99	6.95 6.95 3.95 7.95 3.95 3.49 3.90 N/A 2.95 3.95	3.00 2.83 3.50 8.90 4.00 3.00 2.90 3.90 2.50 2.90

<sup>\*</sup>Using cabbage weight of 900g and lettuce weight of 500g to find cost/kg

## **6b.** Price comparison

Items in the VHFB	Mean pri	ce per kg (\$) for	Mean Difference			
	Market (n=2)	Supermarkets (n=3)	Grocers (n= 3)	Supermarkets and Grocers (n=5)	Market prices (\$) compared to other vendors	Market prices compared to other vendors (% cheaper)
<u>Fruit</u>						
Apples	2.70	3.15	4.28	3.72	-1.02	27.5
Oranges	2.30	2.94	7.48	5.21	-2.91	55.85
Bananas	1.80	2.83	3.48	3.16	-1.36	43.04
<b>Vegetables</b>						
Tomatoes	5.29	7.63	6.50	7.07	-1.80	25.46
Potatoes	1.20	2.50	3.97	3.24	-2.05	63.27
Pumpkin	1.59	2.50	3.82	3.16	-1.57	49.68
Cabbage*	4.20	5.25	5.05	5.15	-0.95	18.45
Lettuce*	5.48	7.80	6.50	7.15	-1.67	23.36
Carrots	1.85	2.32	2.30	2.31	-0.46	19.91
Onions	1.85	3.13	3.48	3.31	-1.50	45.32
TOTAL	28.25	41.05	46.86	43.51	-15.26	= Average of \$37.18

<sup>\*</sup>Using cabbage weight of 900g and lettuce weight of 500g

<sup>\*</sup>Prices were recorded during April-May 2017. Price comparison applicable during this point of time.