



KITCHEN TABLE TALKS

DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

March 2021

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Te Tairāwhiti is blessed with fertile farmland, innovative farmers and food businesses, and a rich diversity of food cultures, skills and knowledge.



BACKGROUND

It's no secret that communities across Te Tairāwhiti are facing some pretty big challenges including a rapidly expanding population and urban growth increasing pressure on our farmers and valuable farmland, while limited access to fresh, healthy, affordable food and busy modern lifestyles are leading to high rates of preventable chronic health issues.

The Rau Tipu Rau Ora Tairāwhiti COVID-19 pandemic response and recovery plan (launched in 2020) recognises that tackling these challenges requires a united approach working with our iwi, farms, schools, businesses, organisations, individuals, government and our diverse community groups.

Right now, too many New Zealanders are hungry - struggling to access affordable and nourishing kai (food).

Over the last few years, our nation's social service agencies, social enterprises, and food industries have given out more and more food – as the number of kiwis experiencing food poverty has steadily grown. The COVID-19 pandemic has escalated these existing challenges dramatically – and charitable responses have again expanded to try and meet the need.

This recognition has led to the initiation of the Te Mahinga Kai o Tairāwhiti collective impact initiative, which aims to support Tairāwhiti, community food leaders and Tairāwhiti residents in the establishment, promotion and expansion of an affordable, nourishing and sustainable food system for all Te Tairāwhiti residents.

A key part of this initiative is the development of a whole of community food strategy for Tairāwhiti as a crucial step in developing a comprehensive response to these challenges, directly informed and shaped by communities across the region.

PURPOSE

The purpose of a community food strategy for Te Tairāwhiti is to:

Raise awareness of the challenges facing our local food system and how this impacts the health of people and the environment, as well as our strengths and opportunities.

Guide decision-making and action in and across the food system.

Provide an advocacy platform in local, regional and national spheres.

VISION

The overarching vision for the Te Mahinga Kai o Tairāwhiti initiative is ...

making Te Tairāwhiti a place where everyone has access to affordable and nourishing food and having a local food system that is regenerative and protects natural resources.

The Kitchen Table Talks conversation process is to ensure that a Tairāwhiti community food strategy to achieve this vision has

DIRECT COMMUNITY INPUT AND OWNERSHIP THROUGH AN INCLUSIVE PROCESS.



PROCESS, TIMELINE

MARCH 2021 – JUNE 2021 HOSTING UP TO 20 KITCHEN TABLE TALKS ALL ACROSS TAIRĀWHITI, INVOLVING UP TO 200 PEOPLE.



KITCHEN TABLE TALKS WILL TAKE THE FORM OF A GUIDED KŌRERO (CONVERSATION) IN WHICH PARTICIPANTS ARE INVITED TO SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCE, IDEAS AND PERSPECTIVES FOR TAIRĀWHITI'S FOOD SYSTEM.



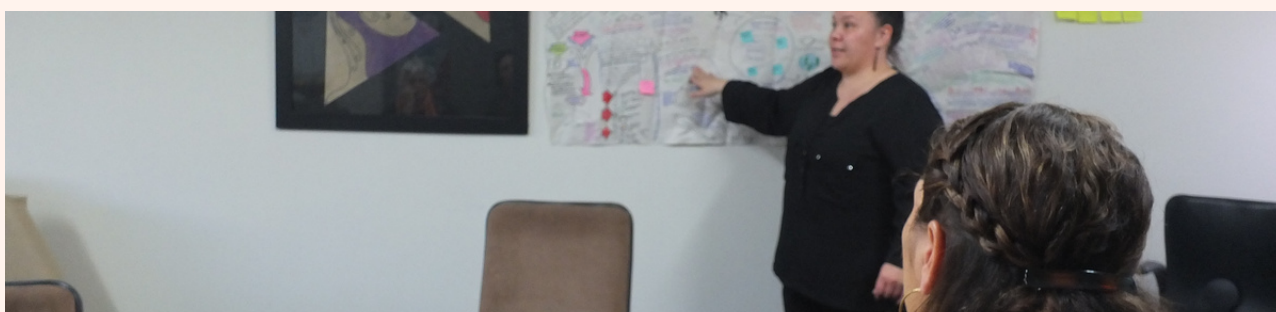
KITCHEN TABLE TALKS = SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS OF 8-12 PEOPLE, IN AN INFORMAL SETTING FOR UP TO 1-2HOURS AT A TIME.

PROCESS, TIMELINE

THE KITCHEN TABLE TALKS WILL BE TARGETING SPECIFIC SETTINGS SUCH AS SCHOOLS, WORKPLACES, TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS, SPORTS CLUBS, WAKA AMA, KAUPAPA MĀORI HUI, CHURCHES, MUMS AND BUBS GROUPS, ANTENATAL CLASSES, KAUMĀTUA GROUPS, YOUTH GROUPS ETC.



EACH OF THESE TALKS WILL BE HOSTED AND DOCUMENTED BY OUR HEALTHY FAMILIES EAST CAPE TEAM WITH THE INTENTION THAT WE'LL ENGAGE A FEW OTHER PEOPLE WHO MIGHT BE INTERESTED TO FACILITATE SOME KITCHEN TABLE TALKS WITH US.



THE OUTCOMES FROM ALL KITCHEN TABLE TALKS WILL BE SUMMARISED ALONG KEY THEMES TO INFORM AND DIRECTLY SHAPE A WHOLE OF COMMUNITY FOOD STRATEGY FOR TAIRĀWHITI.



OUR PRINCIPLES

The Kitchen Table conversation process to inform and shape this Tairāwhiti community food strategy is based on the approach and principles of Healthy Families NZ:



- Collective response, collective action



- Enabling local solutions to local needs driven by local people
- Developing connections, knowledge and valuing the expertise within and across our communities.



- There is a wealth of knowledge, successful local projects and initiatives across Te Tairāwhiti that this initiative is building upon, working with and seeking to enhance.

Visual notetaking by Kami from Tāiki E!



CONVERSATION GUIDELINES AND STRUCTURE

At the start of each conversation, the Facilitator who is hosting the event you are attending will work with your group to develop some ground rules for the discussion to create a safe, respectful and open environment for the conversation. Some suggested guidelines include:

- Speak on behalf of yourself only
- If you are not speaking, your job is to listen wholeheartedly
- Listen openly to ideas
- Speak briefly, and allow time for others
- Don't be afraid to ask for clarity
- Assume best intentions: everyone's perspective is valuable and important.

The Facilitator will act as a host and guide through the discussion themes. They will be working to record the conversations in writing and diagrams, and may at times pause to clarify what you or others are saying. It is important we document accurately the ideas, issues and experiences that are put forward, as they directly inform and shape the Tairawhiti community food strategy. The basic structure of a Kitchen Table Conversation is as follows:

- 1. Welcome and housekeeping.**
- 2. Brief introductions from the whole group.**
- 3. Sequential discussion, as determined by the group and the Facilitator, across 4 broad Local Food System themes and question blocks (detailed below) with a break midway through.**
- 4. Final remarks from the group and key take-aways from the session.**
- 5. Next steps and conversation close.**

HOW MIGHT WE DESIGN A BETTER LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM?

The food system is extremely complex. If food systems were linear, at one end of the spectrum would be farmers, or producers, and on the other end would be consumers....But food systems aren't linear nor are they circular. They are webs of people and the resources and behaviours they affect...' FOOD, FARMS AND COMMUNITY: EXPLORING FOOD SYSTEMS

Take a close look at the diagram below, and trace all the points of intersection between you, if we make you the central actor (the one with the food literacy yellow cloud over your head!) and the health, social, political, biological and economic systems, and then each of the components of those systems. You can start to get a feel than at whatever point you pick of the food system you find threads and feedback loops and influences from multiple other points.

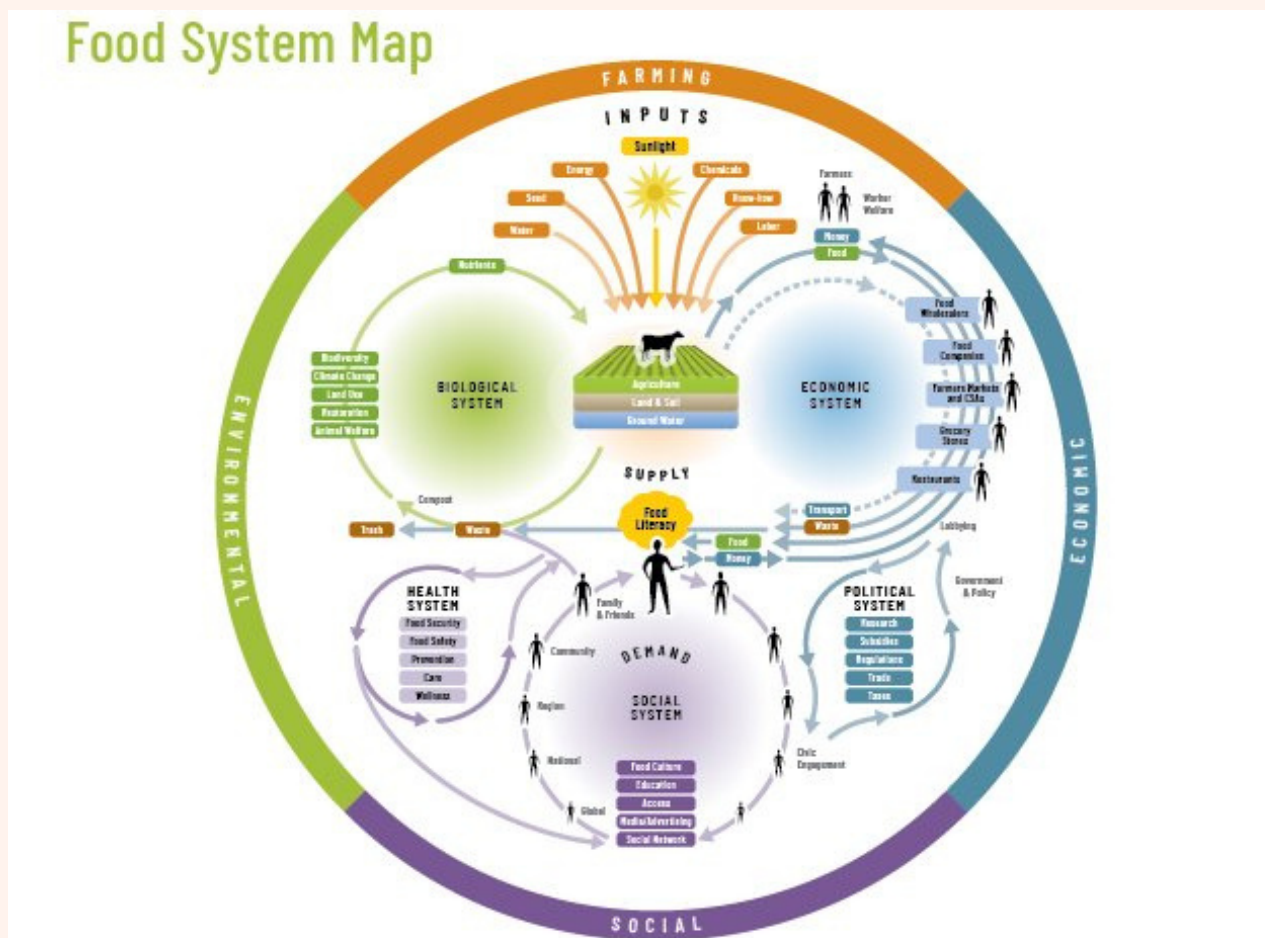


Diagram by nourishlife.org

SO WHAT DOES A HEALTHY FOOD SYSTEM LOOK LIKE?

A traditional Māori kai (food) system is distinguished by a Māori cultural definition understood through mātauranga (knowledge), with shared whakapapa (interrelationships and genealogy) to atua (ancestors with continuing influence over particular domains) and practiced through tikanga (customs and protocols).

Despite a rich understanding and practice around a traditional Māori kai system in a pre-European era, the colonial experience in Aotearoa has resulted in a dominant view of food that marginalises Māori perspectives and approaches.

The children of Ranginui and Papatūānuku are considered the kaitiaki (guardians) of the various realms of Earth.

Māori kai, therefore, is considered to share the **mauri** (life essence and spiritual power) of **atua**, which enshrined our **tinana** (body), **hinengaro** (mind), **wairua** (spirit), and **whānau** (community).

In August 2019, health promoter, writer and part-time blogger Te Miri Rangī released an article discussing his thoughts about what characterizes a traditional Māori kai system in which mātauranga Māori informs the beliefs, values and practices around kai for Māori, and how these are relevant for Māori today.

Tāne - who presides over the forests

Tangaroa - who protects the ocean

Haumiatiketike - who is the guardian of uncultivated crops

"Our tupuna never had to deal with lollies, pies, cakes and takeaways, but our tupuna had the fortune of living naturally and eating kai enhanced with the whakapapa of the atua.

That approach enabled their vigour and strength to thrive. If you can see the kai that you eat is something greater than an instant palatable satisfaction, as kai that shares whakapapa with atua, then it feeds not only the puku, but your wairua and your spirit as well. That is a kaupapa Māori approach to dieting. That is a Māori food system." – Te Miri Rangī

SO WHAT DOES A HEALTHY FOOD SYSTEM LOOK LIKE?

In June 2010, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, American Nurses Association, American Planning Association, and American Public Health Association released their principles for a healthy, sustainable food system. It's become a reference point for communities working to transform their food systems all across the globe.

1. HEALTH PROMOTING

- Supports the physical and mental health of all farmers, workers and consumers.
- Accounts for the public health impacts across the entire lifecycle of how food is produced, processed, packaged, labelled, distributed, marketed and consumed.



2. SUSTAINABLE

- Conserves, protects, and regenerates natural resources, landscapes and biodiversity
- Meet our current needs without compromising the ability to meet the needs of future generations.



3. RESILIENT

Thrives in the face of challenges, such as:

- Unpredictable climate
- Increased pest resistance
- Declining, increasingly expensive water and energy supplies.

4. DIVERSE IN

- Size & scale
- Geography
- Culture
- Choice.



5. ECONOMICALLY BALANCED

- Provides economic opportunities that are balanced across the regions and scales.



6. TRANSPARENT

- Provides for farmers, workers and consumers to gain the knowledge necessary to understand how food is produced, transformed, distributed, marketed, consumed and disposed
- Empowers farmers, workers and consumers to actively participate in decision-making in all sectors of the system.



7. FAIR

- Supports fair and just outcomes for all farmers, workers and consumers
- Provides equitable physical access to affordable food that is health promoting and culturally appropriate.



THE CURRENT STATE OF OUR LOCAL KAI SYSTEM

Tairāwhiti-Gisborne is located on the East Coast of the North Island of Aotearoa New Zealand with a current population of 48,016 throughout the entire region.

Tairāwhiti-Gisborne has the highest population of Māori of all regions through Aotearoa New Zealand with 53 per cent identifying as Māori, compared to 14 per cent nationally.

The unemployment rate in the Tairāwhiti-Gisborne is 9.3 per cent for people aged 15 years and over, compared with 7.1 per cent for all of New Zealand (Stats NZ, 2020).

Due to the high demand of agricultural product overseas, this has meant there is limited number of fresh food retailers or providers to local customers, negatively impacting on the economic affordability and consumption of healthy, local food. This is not only for low-income families, but has also become an increasing problem for higher income families as well.

The region has approximately 17,000 ha of land suitable for horticultural production, with approximately 5,000 ha on the flats around Uawa, Waiapu and Tikitiki (Gisborne District Council, 2020).

Uncontrolled urban growth has the potential to spread over the productive soils of the Poverty Bay Flats. These fragments reduce the land available for food production and therefore, threaten the viability of a local food economy for the Tairāwhiti region.

THE CURRENT STATE OF OUR LOCAL KAI SYSTEM

During February 2019, a break in the water supply pipe left Gisborne city with less than 24 hours of sufficient water supply, bringing to the forefront the inadequacy of the regions drinking water supply and reliability. The on effect such an event could have had on food production and economic use is catastrophic, demonstrating a need to improve water supply and efficiency across the region.

The ongoing flooding experiences that occur annually during the winter season also hinder the capabilities of a flourishing water supply and local food economy.

There are few opportunities for local residents to connect with local growers and buy local produce, due in part to policy restrictions regarding selling produce at the farm gate, as well as market share characteristics of new retail spaces which tend to favour the large corporate food retailers over smaller independent grocery stores.

There continues to be opportunities for the Gisborne District Council to collect household organic food waste, recycling through community to develop healthy urban and rural township recycling and waste management.

There is also an opportunity for markets to be tested and develop further to allow municipal food waste as soil conditioner (Gisborne District Council, 2020).

GROWING A VIBRANT LOCAL FOOD ECONOMY

Food is a central component of our local economy, from our farmers, to our grocery stores, cafes and food businesses, the people they employ, the products they sell and the price at which they sell them...

Prompting questions for this theme include...

- To what extent is the our local food system contributing to a better Tairāwhiti economy?
- Does our local food system achieve a fair economic return for local food producers, processors and suppliers?
- Is there open information, debate and representation in this decision making?
- How accessible and affordable is local food?
- Is it easy for farmers to distribute their produce locally?

WHAT WE KNOW

Tairāwhiti experiences ongoing loss and sale of agricultural land not only to housing development, but also a booming forestry industry. This threatens the local and regional sustainability and food security for future generations. Driving this loss is also the threat of non-local developers.

Urban growth has increased and reduced the land available for food production due to the demand for lifestyle block living and the financial gains from selling their land.

There is economic pressure on Tairāwhiti residents that negatively affect their eating patterns and overall health & wellbeing. Part of this pressure is due to limited local employment, post-secondary educational opportunities, less time, energy & money available for pursuing healthy eating and active living.

GROWING A VIBRANT LOCAL FOOD ECONOMY

“100% of our beef is exported”
LOCAL RESIDENT



“We use lots of pesticides and fertilizers across the region that lead to soil degradation and poor health of the environment”
LOCAL RESIDENT



“I give our food system an 8, as we have great seafood and a big area for growing your own food, distance is not too far to travel”
LOCAL RESIDENT



QUESTION BLOCK #1

- Do you have direct experience or have you witnessed some of the challenges, issues and strengths outlined above?
- What other experiences do you have of our local food economy?
- What are your ideas for actions and recommendations that could be included in a local food strategy to address these problems?
- What has/hasn't worked previously to meet these challenges, and why/why not?



“Although we're a district rich in horticulture, agriculture, good soils etc. Water source to sustain is running low.”
LOCAL RESIDENT

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

TE TAIRĀWHITI IS BLESSED WITH FERTILE FARMLAND, INNOVATIVE FARMERS AND A RICH DIVERSITY OF FOOD HERITAGE, SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE.

WE HAVE ALL THE INGREDIENTS WE NEED TO GROW A VIBRANT, STRONG AND RESILIENT FUTURE.

THE HEALTH OF OUR ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITIES

Here we're talking about the health of the natural systems that make our lives possible, the climate, the land, the waterways, soil and animals, including humans as we are part of these natural cycles too!

Prompting questions for this theme include...

- How sustainable is the use of resources and energy across the food system? (soil, water, fossil fuels..)
- What effect does the food system have on the local environment in terms of air and water quality?
- Is biodiversity adversely affected by the current food system?
- Does the built environment leave public space for food growing?
- Is it common for people to grow food in and around their homes?
- Is it easy to access food from local producers?

WHAT WE KNOW

Urban growth & forestry has the potential to reduce the land available for food production which threatens the viability of local food economy for the region in Te Tairāwhiti.

URGENT ISSUES IN THE ECOLOGY OF HUMAN HEALTH ACROSS OUR COMMUNITIES. New Zealand's largest crayfish nursery rua koura located in the inner harbour is under threat from a proposed expansion of the Eastland Port.

CHALLENGES FOR FUTURE AGRICULTURE PRODUCTIVITY. Access to reliable water supplies and the impact that subdivisions & non-regenerative intensive production can have on soils and ecosystems are critical and, ecosystems are critical constraining factors on future agriculture production capacity.

THE HEALTH OF OUR ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITIES

"There is limited food production in and around people's homes"
LOCAL RESIDENT



"Because of regulations we are not allowed to farm kill to sell or swap with people. There are so many health regulations that stop that"
local resident
LOCAL RESIDENT



"Agriculture industry & sectors is significant and has a huge part to play in that. We are exposed given our entrenched agriculture, sector and traditional intensive farming"
LOCAL RESIDENT



QUESTION BLOCK #2

- Do you have a direct experience or have you witnessed some of the challenges, issues & strengths outlined above?
- What other experiences do you have of the intersection between food, agriculture & our local ecology? (all of the above are interrelated. Changes in one part of the system affect the rest of the parts)
- What are your ideas for actions & recommendations could be included in a local food strategy to address these problems?
- What has/hasn't worked previously (either in this area or elsewhere) to meet these challenges, and why/why not?

"We are the kaitiaki of this whenua. Traditionally we had our infrastructure in place to grow and prepare food to our people with what they needed and not in excess. We had enough. Now in the 20th century Māori are knocking at the door of their own whenua in absence of the infrastructure required for them to support their families to provide kai & sustenance"
LOCAL RESIDENT

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

IMAGINE IF WE HAD A FOOD SYSTEM THAT PRODUCED NUTRITIOUS FOOD THAT RESTORED THE LAND.

We can change the way we make and get our food so that it becomes food again – something that feeds our body & souls. Imagine if we adopted regenerative thinking into all aspects of our food system infrastructure.

POLITICS AND OUR FOOD SYSTEM

Here we're looking at the way our food system works politically. How are decisions made in relation to our local food environment? Do residents feel like they have a voice, and are heard? Is there ownership, dialogue and engagement with local food issues? How can this be improved?

Prompting questions for this theme include...

- To what extent are decision making processes in the food system transparent?
- Do existing governance processes have legitimacy and respect in the community?
- Do all people at all times have safe and secure access to healthy food, and is this protected locally?
- How well do social communications and media work to support the local food system?
- In the event of a natural disaster or economic event, what level of food security would local people have? If long distance transport was shut down, would people be able to access adequate and nutritious food locally?

WHAT WE KNOW

THERE ARE A RANGE OF LOCAL ORGANISATIONS THAT PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR LOCAL PEOPLE TO HAVE A VOICE IN THE FOOD SYSTEM.

These include volunteering or becoming a member of community gardens and maara kai, landcare groups, food rescue organisations, lunch in school programmes, community kitchen programmes and the Te Mahinga Kai o Tairāwhiti collective (formed in 2020).

OUR LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM IS SHAPED BY LOCAL AND NATIONAL GOVERNMENT POLICIES.

While we're focused on the local food system, the broader national policy contexts have great impact. In particular, national policy influences affordable access to healthy food in regards to the competition framework that favour large supermarkets, and national and local policies which permits the proliferation of non-essential food outlets.

ALL PEOPLE AT ALL TIMES DO NOT HAVE SAFE AND SECURE ACCESS TO HEALTH FOOD.

Results released from Stats NZ show child poverty has improved overall, but for Māori and Pacific children continue to be worst affected across the board (2021). The impacts of our local food system can be felt economically, environmentally and at a community level and addressing what these causes are, as a result of the food system, is important in being able to move forward to sustainable solutions.

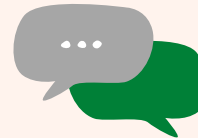
POLITICS AND OUR FOOD SYSTEM

“Create more secure and higher value jobs with value jobs with value add”
LOCAL RESIDENT

Our political environment and economy are our downfall – “The political will to change laws for sugar tax is needed”
LOCAL RESIDENT

“Limited attention paid to soil and water health”
LOCAL RESIDENT

GOOD
JOB



QUESTION BLOCK #3

- Do you have direct experience or have you witnessed some of the challenges, issues and strengths outlined above? Please share with us!
- What other experiences do you have of the political part of our local food system?
- What are your ideas for actions and recommendations could be included in a local food strategy to address these problems?
- What has/hasn't worked previously (either in this area or elsewhere) to meet these challenges, and why/why not?

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

PEOPLE FEEL THERE IS A LACK OF LOCAL VOICES AT THE DECISION-MAKING TABLE.

Barriers created by governmental policy hinder the ability for whānau and community to contribute meaningfully to a local food system.


FOOD SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE AND CULTURE

Culture is 'how and why we do things around here'. In thinking about the culture of food, 'culture' asks us to probe at the way we eat, shop, cook and think about food in our community. What foods are socially accepted, what patterns of eating are 'the norm'? What influences our food choices?

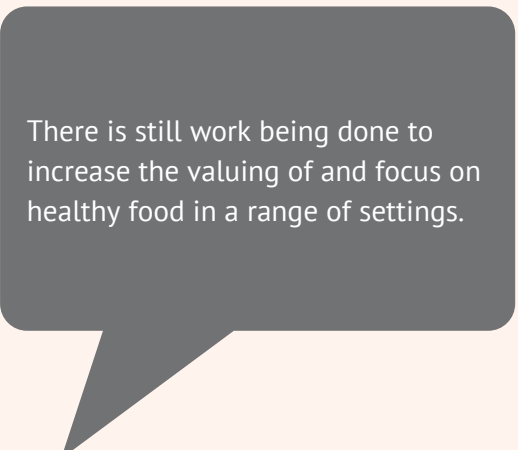
Prompting questions for this theme include...

- Is cultural diversity in food enabled and supported through the local food system?
- Are there welcoming public places for people to congregate through food and have a sense of belonging?
- Is food celebrated locally? How?
- Is healthy food a meaningful part of people's leisure time?
- Is there an active recognition of the original custodians of the land and their customs relating to food hunting, gathering, cultivation and preparation?
- Do people know how to choose, store and cook with fresh, seasonal ingredients?

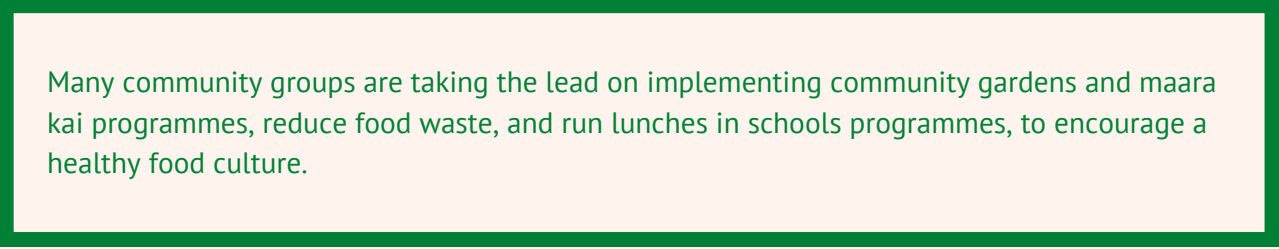
WHAT WE KNOW



We are culturally diverse with people living in Tairāwhiti who identify as Māori, European, Pasifika or Asian. This cultural diversity is not reflected in the local food retail environment.



There is still work being done to increase the valuing of and focus on healthy food in a range of settings.



Many community groups are taking the lead on implementing community gardens and maara kai programmes, reduce food waste, and run lunches in schools programmes, to encourage a healthy food culture.

FOOD SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE AND CULTURE

“We could look into green trade between whānau and businesses for things such as plants and kai”
LOCAL RESIDENT



“Many businesses and providers donate kai, which is awesome, but this is not sustainable.”
LOCAL RESIDENT



“We waste a lot of food on personal/whānau levels. We need to learn more manaakitanga and sharing when we are in abundance”
LOCAL RESIDENT

QUESTION BLOCK #4



- Do you have direct experience or have you witnessed some of the challenges, issues and strengths outlined above? Please share with us!
- What other experiences do you have of our local food culture?
- What are your ideas for actions and recommendations could be included in a local food strategy to address these problems?
- What has/hasn't worked previously (either in this area or elsewhere) to meet these challenges, and why/why not?

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

FOOD SITS AT THE CENTRE OF OUR LIVES. It shapes our health & wellbeing and landscapes in which we live. It impacts the strength of our economy and the vibrancy of our culture. But our modern way growing, transporting, processing, selling and consuming food has created multiple challenges.

ABOUT US

About Healthy Families East Cape

Healthy Families NZ is about all of us working together to create local solutions to local challenges that can be driven by local people. The Ministry of Health-funded Healthy Families NZ initiative aims to improve people's health by creating healthier environments in the places where we live, learn, work and play, for the prevention of chronic disease.

Healthy Families East Cape is one of 10 Healthy Families NZ locations, which include Far North, Waitakere, South Auckland, Rotorua, WhanganuiRangitikei-Ruapehu, Hutt Valley, Christchurch and Invercargill. We deliver the Healthy Families NZ approach from Ōpōtiki, right around the East Cape, to Tairāwhiti.

Our team are supporting locally-led solutions by connecting leaders from a wide range of organisations, places and systems to identify, design and implement the measurable changes they, and we, want and need to see in our communities to create greater impact on our health and wellbeing.

Healthy Families East Cape is delivered by Te Ao Hou Trust, a community provider in the Ōpōtiki district offering quality services to inspire our whānau and community to flourish. For more information about Healthy Families East Cape please visit www.healthyfamilieseastcape.co.nz.

About our Steering Group

Te Mahinga Kai o Tairāwhiti is a cross-sector collective who share an interest to grow a healthy kai system.

About the Backbone Support Organisation

Healthy Families East Cape are the backbone support organisation for the Te Mahinga Kai o Tairāwhiti collective and were commissioned to deliver the Kitchen Table Talks phase.

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