

THE CITY OF  
GREATER GEELONG

# FEEDING AUSTRALIA: A NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY STRATEGY



RESPONSE TO THE DISCUSSION PAPER

SEPTEMBER 2025

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT TO COUNTRY

We Acknowledge the Wadawurrung People as the Traditional Owners of the Land, Waterways and Skies. We pay our respects to their Elders, past, present, and emerging. We Acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are part of our Greater Geelong community today.



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# Executive Summary

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The City of Greater Geelong welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the development of Australia's first National Food Security Strategy. As Victoria's largest regional municipality, we see first-hand the pressures climate change, urban sprawl, rising cost of living, and food deserts place on our community's health and wellbeing. At the same time, we recognise the strengths of our region: a diverse base of local producers, a strong seafood industry, and place-based organisations with a proven track record of improving equitable access to food.

This submission highlights key principles, priorities, and actions that can help ensure the Strategy delivers tangible outcomes for households and communities.

Local governments, including the City of Greater Geelong, are already advancing food security through initiatives in policy, procurement, circular food systems, supporting community-led projects and dignified approaches to food relief. With adequate national coordination and investment, these efforts can be scaled to deliver lasting impact.

We recommend that the Strategy:

- **Recommendation 1:** Embed Food Justice as a guiding principle to ensure actions are fair, inclusive, and sustainable.
- **Recommendation 2:** Adopt a medium-term (5–10 year) timeframe with clear objectives, followed by review and renewal.
- **Recommendation 3:** Establish strong governance mechanisms with cross-sector representation and clear accountability.
- **Recommendation 4:** Provide sufficient and sustained resourcing across all levels of government to enable implementation.
- **Recommendation 5:** Embed a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework with measurable targets and regular public reporting.

- **Recommendation 6:** Recognise and scale proven local and community-led initiatives, such as those underway in Greater Geelong.
- **Recommendation 7:** Strengthen supply chain resilience through regional infrastructure, shorter supply chains, and municipal markets.
- **Recommendation 8:** Redefine productivity around nutrition, equity, and sustainability, with national targets for total system productivity.
- **Recommendation 9:** Diversify food retail and address structural cost-of-living drivers to improve dignified access to affordable and culturally appropriate food.
- **Recommendation 10:** Support climate-smart and regenerative farming and protect farmland through national policy and planning.
- **Recommendation 11:** Embed First Nations food sovereignty and resource culturally inclusive, community-led food pathways.
- **Recommendation 12:** Strengthen food environments by regulating unhealthy food products and investing in healthy retail and local food infrastructure.
- **Recommendation 13:** Use public procurement to prioritise local producers, support regional economies, and deliver healthier food.
- **Recommendation 14:** Recognise food security as a national security issue and embed it within climate, disaster, and social cohesion planning.

Together, these recommendations position the Strategy to unify efforts across government, industry, and community, embedding health, equity, and sustainability at its core.

With strong national leadership and investment, Australia can build a food system that nourishes all people, strengthens communities, and sustains the ecosystems on which we depend.

# Response to the Discussion Paper

## INTRODUCTION

With almost 300,000 residents, the City of Greater Geelong (the City) is Victoria's largest regional municipality. Located 75 kilometres south-west of Melbourne, the municipality covers an area of 1,252 km<sup>2</sup>, comprising suburban, coastal and country areas.

Like many parts of Australia, our local food system is under pressure from climate change, the loss of agricultural land and emergence of food deserts, high rates of obesity and chronic diseases which impact community health and wellbeing, and rising food insecurity.

Greater Geelong has some unique assets that we can draw on to address these challenges. The region has a diverse range of local farms and food producers, an extensive seafood industry and a vibrant food tourism sector. There is also a strong base of place-based organisations and community groups that have worked for many years to improve equitable access to healthy food in the region.

The City welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the development of the National Food Security Strategy (the Strategy) and commends the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry for preparing the *Discussion Paper* and community engagement process that enables interest holders to provide feedback.

The Strategy has the potential to unify Australia's food agenda under a coherent national vision and leverage our municipality's strengths within a nationally coordinated framework of objectives and action.

## PRINCIPLES

### 1. What other principles should government, industry and community prioritise to support the development of the strategy and why are these important?

#### **Recommendation 1: Embed Food Justice as a guiding principle of the National Food Security Strategy**

We commend the principles identified in the *Discussion Paper* – whole of food system, collaborative, ambitious and forward-thinking, outcomes-based, and practical – all of which will be essential to the success of the Strategy.

The true measure of a national food system is whether it nourishes its people and sustains the ecosystems that underpin food and farming. While Australia's agricultural output is increasing, rising food insecurity, growing rates of chronic diet-related disease, and ongoing environmental

pressures highlight a widening gap between production and wellbeing. This signals an urgent opportunity to strengthen the food system so it can deliver both healthy diets and environmental sustainability for future generations.

We recommend the inclusion of Food Justice as an additional guiding principle. Embedding food justice within the strategy would ensure that actions are not only practical and outcomes-based but also fair, inclusive, and sustainable. Food justice is not simply access to food, but rather a holistic framework encompassing social equity, food security, community agency, environmental sustainability, and transformation of the entire food system.

Food Justice:

- Promotes equity in health outcomes by reducing avoidable differences in access to nutritious and affordable food across communities.
- Supports sustainable food systems by encouraging farming and food production practices that are ecologically sound, provides culturally appropriate food sources, and safeguards the environment for future generations.
- Strengthens community resilience by addressing structural barriers linked to socioeconomic status, gender, or race that can limit fair participation in the food system.
- Values food producers and workers by recognising the importance of fair wages, safe conditions, and fair market returns for farmers, growers, and small-scale producers.
- Upholds food sovereignty by supporting communities to define their own food systems and food practices in ways that are culturally, socially, and environmentally sustainable.

This framing directly aligns with the priority reforms of the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*, which emphasise shared decision-making, strengthening the community-controlled sector, and respecting cultural rights – all central to advancing food sovereignty and ensuring First Nations peoples can shape their own food systems. Embedding food justice would also contribute to the achievement of key health, wellbeing, and land stewardship targets, by improving access to nutritious and culturally appropriate food, supporting community-controlled food enterprises, and strengthening First Nations stewardship of Country.

It also reflects international best practice. The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations High

Level Panel of Experts highlights the *Right to Food* and the *Right to the City*, underscoring that access to healthy, affordable food is a fundamental human right and that cities must be designed to guarantee equitable food access for all residents, particularly marginalised communities. With over 70% of the world's food now consumed in urban areas, and 40% of food-insecure people living in cities and a further 36% in peri-urban zones, urban and peri-urban food systems must be central to national food security planning.

Local Governments shape the environments where people access and consume food, through initiatives such as community gardens and food hubs, embedding healthy and sustainable procurement policies, planning for equitable market access, and partnering with Aboriginal and community-controlled organisations to uphold food sovereignty. These local approaches demonstrate how food justice can be operationalised on the ground. Embedding them in a national framework would provide coherence, consistency, and scale – connecting federal priorities with community-led delivery.

By applying a food justice lens, local government can help address inequities in food access, build resilience in the face of cost-of-living pressures and climate change, and ensure that all residents can enjoy equitable access to safe, healthy, sustainable food – a priority identified in the City's *Community Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2025–2029* (a legislative requirement in Victoria known formally as the Municipal Health & Wellbeing Plan).

## **2. What timeframe should the strategy work towards – short (1 to 2 years), medium (5 to 10 years) or long (10 plus years), and why?**

To ensure equitable impact across communities in Australia, the Strategy must be supported by effective governance, sufficient resourcing for implementation, and a strong framework for monitoring and evaluation.

### *Timeframe*

**Recommendation 2: Adopt a medium-term (5-10 year) timeframe with clear objectives, followed by review and renewal.**

We recommend that the Strategy adopt a medium-term horizon of 5–10 years, with clearly defined objectives and actions across all levels of government. At the conclusion of this period, priorities, objectives, and investment should be reviewed, and a new strategy developed. This allows for meaningful progress while maintaining the flexibility to

respond to emerging challenges, new evidence, and changing global conditions.

### *Governance*

**Recommendation 3: Establish strong governance mechanisms with cross-sector representation and clear accountability.**

We commend the establishment of the National Food Council and its proposed skills-based membership, which should reflect expertise across the whole food system.

Effective governance will also require coordination between government departments whose current responsibilities are often fragmented. Federal policy settings have traditionally prioritised agricultural commodities, export growth, and economic performance, while local governments focus on community health promotion, social services, and food access for priority populations. A national approach must bridge this gap.

The *Environments for health: municipal public health planning framework* developed by the Victorian Department of Health, provides a practical model for integrating actions across built, social, economic, and natural environments. A similar tool at the Federal level would prevent duplication, improve accountability, and ensure that multiple departments inform and contribute to the Strategy alongside the National Food Council.

### *Resourcing for Implementation*

**Recommendation 4: Provide sufficient and sustained resourcing across all levels of government to enable implementation.**

For the Strategy to succeed, it must be sufficiently resourced to deliver on its objectives.

- Local governments are at the frontline of implementation, with responsibility for initiatives that directly affect access to healthy, affordable, and sustainable food according to local needs.
- State governments are instrumental in developing state policy and frameworks and funding local responses that will achieve national outcomes.
- Federal government has a critical responsibility to set the national expectations and strategically monitor outcomes.

Adequate investment across all levels of government will be essential to translate national priorities into tangible outcomes in communities.

### *Monitoring and Evaluation*

#### **Recommendation 5: Embed a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework with measurable targets and regular public reporting.**

A comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework should be embedded from the outset. This must include measurable goals and targets, shared indicators across all levels of government, and regular public reporting.

Such a framework would allow the Strategy to remain relevant, adapt to dynamic global food system shifts and the climate crisis, and drive continuous improvement. For example, the framework proposed by the *Food Systems Countdown* initiative lists 50 indicators across five thematic areas: 1) diets, nutrition and health; 2) environment, natural resources and production; 3) livelihoods, poverty and equity; 4) governance; and 5) resilience. Additionally, the FAO's *Suite of Food Security Indicators* are classified in accordance with the availability, access, utilization and stability dimensions of food security.

While urgent action is required, food system transformation is complex and will require sustained effort over decades; robust evaluation is therefore critical to long-term success.

#### **3. Are there examples of current or planned initiatives by you or your organisation to improve food security in your sector?**

#### **Recommendation 6: Recognise and scale proven local and community-led initiatives, such as those underway in Greater Geelong.**

The City has committed to a range of strategic objectives and actions to improve food security under the *Equitable Access to Safe, Healthy and Sustainable Food* priority of the *Community Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2025–2029*.

This work, as detailed and linked below, is guided by the domains of collective impact for healthy, equitable and sustainable food systems, as outlined by VicHealth's Local Food Partnerships program. Our initiatives span across policy, procurement, circular food approaches, community-led action, and dignified approaches to food relief.

### *Influence local food policy*

- *Community Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2025–2029*
- *Catering Policy*
- *Facility Food & Beverage Policy (DRAFT)*

- *Social & Environmental Procurement Policy (DRAFT)*
- *Community Food System Mapping* - developed in partnership with Sustain

### *Adopt healthy and more sustainable public food procurement*

- *Promoting CHANGE* - in partnership with Deakin University and National Nutrition Foundation
- *Catering for Good* - in partnership with Barwon Health and Healthy Eating Advisory Service
- *Vic Kids Eat Well* – Local Government settings, in partnership with Cancer Council Victoria, National Nutrition Foundation, Victorian Government

### *Promote circular food approaches and initiatives*

- *Garden Organics Program*
- *Geelong Botanic Gardens*
- *Geelong City Market*

### *Community-led food system projects engaging priority groups*

- *Eat Well, Live Well*
- *Community Strengthening Grants*
- *First Nations Cultural Heritage Grants*
- *Neighbourhood House Grants*
- *Growing Together a VicHealth Growing Healthy Communities Grant Proposal* (pending outcome) – in partnership with Northern Bay College.

### *Advance dignified approaches that bridge food relief and food security*

- *Community Gardens*
- *Food Secure Communities, ARC Linkage Grant* – led by Deakin University
- *Funding Geelong Foodshare* to support the operation of social supermarkets.

The City also recognises the vital work of place-based and community-owned organisations and services in our municipality:

- *Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative* – Merrijig Tucker Program
- *The Good Neighbourhood Project* – Grow, Cook, Eat

- [Give Where You Live Foundation](#) – The Paddock
- [Geelong Regional Libraries](#) – Food 4 Future, Seed Libraries
- [Geelong Foodshare](#) – Social Supermarkets
- [Farm My School](#) – Bellarine Secondary College
- [Common Ground Project](#) & [Cultura](#) – Staying Grounded, Farmers Market at Hope Community Garden
- [Bellarine Community Health](#) – Little Growers
- [Barwon Health](#) – Vic Kids Eat Well – School settings, Community Kitchens
- [Barwon South West Public Health Unit](#) – Food System Local Area Networks

Together, these initiatives demonstrate a comprehensive and collaborative approach to food security – combining strategic policy reform, practical procurement change, community-led projects, and research partnerships. They highlight the importance of embedding food security in everyday systems while investing in innovative models that empower communities to lead change.

## KEY PRIORITY AREAS & WHOLE OF SYSTEM CONSIDERATIONS

### 4. Do the proposed key priority areas and whole-of-system considerations adequately represent the actions needed for an effective food security strategy? If not, what is missing?

The Discussion Paper identifies important key priority areas, but from a local government perspective there are notable gaps. A stronger focus is required on:

- Localised food supply chains that can buffer communities against global shocks.
- Redefining productivity so that it reflects nourishment, equity, and sustainability – not just yield.
- Diversifying food retail environments and addressing cost-of-living pressures, which are key drivers of food insecurity at the community level.
- Embedding whole-of-system considerations such as climate change, people and culture, health and nutrition, trade, and national security in ways that reflect the lived realities of local communities.

These inclusions would ensure the Strategy connects high-level priorities with practical outcomes for households and neighbourhoods.

#### *KPA: Supply Chain Resilience*

### **Recommendation 7: Strengthen supply chain resilience through regional infrastructure, shorter supply chains, and municipal markets.**

The Discussion Paper notes that Australia's food supply chain has functioned well during recent disruptions. However, local government experience suggests that this resilience is uneven and fragile. Rising costs, limited fuel reserves, climate shocks, and disruptions to global trade can quickly undermine food access at the community level, particularly for those already experiencing disadvantage.

Greater Geelong is a prime example of these dynamics. While the region benefits from a productive agricultural hinterland, a significant seafood industry and emerging food tourism, urban growth is eroding farmland and long supply chains leave local communities vulnerable to disruption. Localised and diverse supply systems are needed to ensure food access is not dependent on distant, fragile distribution networks.

Drawing on Professor Timothy Lang's *Reshaping Food Systems* framework, Australia must rebalance from long, centralised, "just-in-time" supply chains towards more resilient, regionalised and sustainable "just-in-case" models. For local governments, this means investment in:

- Regional distribution hubs that aggregate and distribute produce from local growers.
- Shorter supply chains that connect farmers, fishers, and producers directly with consumers, retailers, and public procurement.
- Community-based infrastructure such as municipal markets and food hubs that anchor food access locally and provide equitable, affordable options.

These approaches will not only increase resilience but also support regional economies, reduce the carbon footprint of food transport, and ensure that communities like Greater Geelong are better prepared for future shocks.

#### *KPA: Productivity, Innovation and Growth*

### **Recommendation 8: Redefine productivity around nutrition, equity, and sustainability, with national targets for total system productivity.**

Australia's food and farming system makes a substantial economic contribution, but productivity and growth alone do not guarantee food security. The paradox is clear: Australia exports the majority of what it produces, yet more than three million Australians experience food insecurity. Locally, we see the impacts of this imbalance through rising reliance on food relief, poor diet quality, and high rates of diet-related disease.

We support the call for a shift from total factor productivity towards total system productivity. A narrow focus on total factor productivity has delivered large volumes of cheap food but has also contributed to diet-related ill health, unsustainable environmental degradation, and inequities in who benefits from production.

Whereas developing national measures around total system productivity would mean valuing natural capital, recognising the true costs of poor diets on the health system, and supporting the next generation of farmers and food system workers.

The National Food Security Strategy has an opportunity to redefine productivity in this way and set clear, measurable targets that integrate health, equity, and sustainability.

*KPA: Competition and cost of living*

**Recommendation 9: Diversify food retail and address structural cost-of-living drivers to improve dignified access to affordable food.**

We welcome the government's commitment to act on the findings of the ACCC supermarket inquiry to address excessive market concentration. However, for communities like Greater Geelong, true food security also depends on reshaping the planning environment to provide affordable, dignified alternatives to the supermarket duopoly.

Planning frameworks, including the Victorian Planning Scheme, currently enable the expansion of fast-food precincts while doing little to safeguard equitable access to fresh and affordable food.

*Australian Urban Observatory* spatial data indicates that the average household in Greater Geelong is closer to a fast-food outlet (1,153m) than to a supermarket or greengrocer (1,294m), and areas experiencing socio-economic disadvantage, have higher concentrations of unhealthy food outlets compared to healthy food outlets.

The *Geelong Preventative Health Survey 2024* found that residents in these areas report above-average weekly fast food consumption, reflecting the influence of the local food environment on eating behaviours.

Combined with poor transport links and economic pressure, this limited access to affordable, culturally appropriate food increases the risk of food insecurity – which has doubled in the region in recent years (from 4% in 2017 to 8% in 2024).

At the same time, investment in community food infrastructure is needed to diversify affordable food access. Municipal markets, greengrocers, co-operatives, and social enterprises can keep food dollars circulating locally while offering alternatives to major retailers. Access to shared commercial kitchen facilities has the potential to support small businesses, social enterprises, and community groups to create new, locally owned models of food security.

Addressing competition and cost-of-living pressures also required national action on equity drivers – including adequate JobSeeker payments and benefits, social and affordable housing, and secure employment opportunities – which are essential to ensuring people can afford to eat well.

These connections are reinforced by the *Home Truths Research Report 2025*, which demonstrated the intersection between food insecurity and homelessness in Greater Geelong, and highlighted how compounding disadvantage makes dignified access to food even more critical.

Internationally, approaches such as Scotland's "cash first" model for food security demonstrate how coordinated social protection and food system reform can reduce reliance on food relief while strengthening access to affordable, nutritious food.

Embedding similar approaches in the National Food Security Strategy would enable structural drivers of food insecurity to be addressed alongside improvements to retail diversity.

*WSC: Climate change and sustainability*

**Recommendation 10: Support climate-smart and regenerative farming and protect farmland through national policy and planning.**

Local governments are on the frontline of responding to the impacts of climate change on communities, including food insecurity.

In Greater Geelong, we see the pressures of urban sprawl on farmland, increasing exposure of peri-urban agriculture

to climate shocks, and the rising costs for communities when food supply is disrupted.

The Strategy must support a transition towards more sustainable and regenerative farming systems that restore soil health, protect biodiversity, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, while also protecting agricultural land through planning schemes.

Local Government can play a key role through procurement, waste management, planning decisions and partnerships with farmers, but need national policy direction and investment to enable this transition.

#### *WSC: People*

### **Recommendation 11: Embed First Nations food sovereignty and resource culturally inclusive, community-led food pathways.**

Food is central to culture, identity, and social connection. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, food is deeply linked to culture, land, and self-determination.

Local governments, like the City, are committed to supporting First Nations aspirations for food sovereignty through community grants, partnerships, and place-based projects. However, sustained change requires national action to embed First Nations-led frameworks, such as those outlined in the [VACCHO FoodPATH Report](#), into the Strategy.

For other priority groups, such as people on low incomes, people experiencing homelessness, and culturally diverse communities, local governments deliver and support food programs. However, structural drivers like income adequacy and housing must be addressed federally to enable food security to be realised.

#### *WSC: Health and nutrition*

### **Recommendation 12: Strengthen food environments by regulating unhealthy food products and investing in healthy retail and local food infrastructure.**

Local governments are mandated under the Public Health and Wellbeing Act to improve community health and wellbeing.

Poor diets, driven by the dominance of ultra-processed foods, remain one of the leading contributors to preventable disease and health inequity. The [Australian Institute of Health and Welfare](#) estimates dietary risks already cost the health system over \$16 billion annually, while the [Obesity Evidence Hub](#) projects this will rise to \$228 billion by 2060 if left unaddressed.

At the heart of this challenge is the food environment. Supermarkets are often categorised in spatial datasets as “healthy food outlets,” yet in practice they operate as powerful marketing environments for ultra-processed foods, shaped by multinational companies and profit-driven placement strategies.

This points to the need for a more nuanced definition of healthy food retail that reflects best practice and prioritises outlets where nutritious food is both available and affordable. The Strategy must therefore explicitly recognise the food environment as a commercial determinant of health.

This includes fiscal and regulatory measures to curb the availability and marketing of unhealthy food and drink, while also investing in genuinely healthy retail models.

In Greater Geelong, programs such as [Promoting CHANGE](#) and [Vic Kids Eat Well](#) are already reshaping food environments in schools, recreation facilities, and council-run venues.

Scaling these programs nationally, alongside investment in healthy retail infrastructure, would embed prevention at the centre of the food system, and has the potential to improve diets, and reduce the long-term burden of diet-related disease.

#### *WSC: Trade and market access*

### **Recommendation 13: Use public food procurement to prioritise local producers, support regional economies, and deliver healthier food.**

Food security must start with ensuring that all Australians are well nourished.

A national approach should rebalance priorities so that domestic food security is safeguarded alongside trade objectives.

Public food procurement is a powerful lever that local governments already use, and national policy could extend this impact by requiring public institutions – schools, hospitals, local, state, and federal government facilities – to purchase more food from local and sustainable producers.

This approach would support regional economies, create reliable markets for farmers, and work as a lever to improve the nutritional quality of food provided in public settings.

### *WSC: National and regional security*

#### **Recommendation 14: Recognise food security as a national security issue and embed it within climate change, disaster, and social cohesion planning.**

Food insecurity undermines social cohesion and community stability.

In Greater Geelong, as in other regions, cost-of-living pressures are contributing to increased demand for food relief and rising levels of hardship.

Research, including the *Home Truths Report*, highlights how food insecurity intersects with housing stress, unemployment, and social isolation. Local governments play an essential role in supporting communities through grants, partnerships, and food security planning, but cannot act alone.

A nationally coordinated strategy must treat food security as a matter of national security by embedding it within climate adaptation, disaster preparedness, and social cohesion policies.

#### **5. What actions could the strategy take to address challenges under each key priority area?**

The following actions should be considered to ensure a robust and sustainable food system that can withstand various challenges.

##### *Supply Chain Resilience*

- Fund regional distribution hubs, food hubs and cold storage facilities.
- Support shorter supply chains linking local producers to local consumers, schools, and community organisations.
- Invest in municipal markets and food hubs to diversify supply and strengthen regional economies.

By focusing on supply chain resilience, there is scope to enhance the stability and reliability of food distribution, ensuring that local producers are connected to consumers, schools, and community organisations. This not only strengthens regional economies but also promotes shorter supply chains, reducing the risk of disruptions.

##### *Productivity, Innovation and Growth*

- Develop metrics that measure nourishment, health outcomes, farmer viability, and ecological sustainability.
- Incentivise regenerative agriculture and urban food innovation.
- Support pathways for young and new farmers.
- Integrate international best practice, including Tim Lang's work on total system productivity.

In the realm of productivity, innovation, and growth, developing comprehensive metrics and incentivising regenerative agriculture will lead to improved health outcomes, farmer viability, and ecological sustainability. Supporting pathways for young and new farmers, along with integrating international best practices, will foster a dynamic and innovative agricultural sector.

##### *Competition and Cost of Living*

- Act on ACCC supermarket inquiry findings to address market concentration.
- Incentivise municipal markets, co-operatives, and social enterprises as affordable, local alternatives.
- Address income adequacy, housing affordability and employment at the national level.
- Use planning tools, such as the Victorian Planning Scheme, to reduce food deserts and expand access to community food infrastructure.

Addressing competition and cost of living is crucial for creating a fair and accessible food market. Acting on ACCC supermarket inquiry findings and incentivising municipal markets and social enterprises will provide affordable alternatives and reduce market concentration.

Additionally, tackling broader issues such as income adequacy, housing affordability, and employment will ensure that all individuals have access to nutritious food. Utilising planning tools to reduce food deserts and expand community food infrastructure will further enhance food accessibility and equity.

Overall, these actions are prudent as they collectively contribute to a resilient, innovative, and equitable food system that benefits all stakeholders.

## 6. What actions could the strategy take to address challenges under these whole of system considerations?

Implementation of the following actions is crucial for building a resilient, sustainable, and equitable food system that can effectively address the challenges posed by climate change, social inequities, and economic pressures.

### *Climate Change and Sustainability*

- Embed soil restoration, biodiversity, and emissions reduction into farming support programs.
- Protect farmland from urban encroachment through planning levers.
- Resource local–federal partnerships that support regenerative and climate-smart agriculture.

By embedding soil restoration, biodiversity, and emissions reduction into farming support programs, the Strategy can ensure that agricultural practices contribute positively to the environment and help mitigate climate change. Protecting farmland from urban encroachment and supporting regenerative and climate-smart agriculture through local-federal partnerships will further enhance sustainability and resilience.

### *People*

- Align with Closing the Gap Priority Reforms and VACCHO *FoodPATH Report* recommendations.
- Resource First Nations-led food and farming initiatives.
- Support local governments to partner with diverse communities in delivering culturally inclusive food programs.

Aligning with the Closing the Gap Priority Reforms and VACCHO *FoodPATH Report* recommendations, and resourcing First Nations-led food and farming initiatives, will promote social equity and empower diverse communities. Supporting local governments to partner with these communities in delivering culturally inclusive food programs will foster social cohesion and ensure that all individuals have access to nutritious food.

### *Health and Nutrition*

- Introduce fiscal and regulatory measures to reduce ultra-processed food consumption.

- Support local food infrastructure such as markets, greengrocers, and community food hubs.
- Scale programs like Promoting CHANGE and Vic Kids Eat Well through national investment.

Introducing fiscal and regulatory measures to reduce ultra-processed food consumption, and supporting local food infrastructure such as markets, greengrocers, and community food hubs, will improve public health outcomes. Scaling successful programs like Promoting CHANGE and Vic Kids Eat Well through national investment will further enhance health and nutrition.

### *Trade and Market Access*

- Support public institutions purchase from local and sustainable producers.
- Scale social and sustainable procurement models, such as the Victorian Government's procurement framework, to national impact.

Supporting public institutions to purchase from local and sustainable producers and scaling social and sustainable procurement models to national impact, will strengthen trade and market access.

### *National and Regional Security*

- Include food security in national climate adaptation and disaster preparedness frameworks.
- Resource local government to lead community-level food security planning as part of resilience-building.
- Address food insecurity as a driver of social instability and invest in solutions that strengthen social cohesion.

Including food security in national climate adaptation and disaster preparedness frameworks and resourcing local government to lead community-level food security planning, will ensure that food security is integrated into broader national and regional security strategies. Addressing food insecurity as a driver of social instability and investing in solutions that strengthen social cohesion will create a more stable and inclusive society.

Overall, these actions are essential for creating a food system that is not only resilient and sustainable but also equitable and inclusive, benefiting all stakeholders and ensuring long-term food security for the nation.

## CONCLUSION

Australia stands at a critical juncture. Despite being a major food producer, over three million Australians face food insecurity, while preventable diet-related disease and environmental pressures continue to rise.

Local governments, such as the City, are already responding at the community level, but systemic change requires national leadership backed by State led policy.

The Strategy must unify efforts across governments, industry, and community, embedding health, equity, and sustainability at its core.

By adopting food justice as a guiding principle, resourcing implementation, and committing to strong governance and evaluation, the Strategy can deliver on its promise: a food system that nourishes all Australians while sustaining the ecosystems on which we depend.

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Wurriki Nyal

137-149 Mercer Street, Geelong

8.00am – 5.00pm

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