



Community Food Bowl Framework

A Food System Framework designed to guide current and future actions that strengthen the wider Goulburn Valley community's health, wellbeing and resilience.



Acknowledgement

GV Health acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which its many sites are located. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and celebrate the continuing culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We would also like to acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are receiving care in our services.

We are committed to embracing diversity and welcoming all people.





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Overview



The Community Food Bowl Framework sets a shared direction for strengthening the wider Goulburn Valley's food system to improve health, wellbeing, resilience, and sustainability across the region. Developed by the Food System Framework Reference Group in partnership with local government, community, and industry, the Framework provides a long-term, systems-based approach to how food is grown, accessed, consumed, and valued.

Food systems encompass everything involved in producing, processing, distributing, consuming, and recovering food, as well as the social, cultural, economic, and environmental influences that shape these activities. Taking a food systems approach allows communities to see these elements as interconnected and address challenges in a coordinated, long-term way.

The Framework responds to challenges highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, and rising food insecurity. Food is recognised as central to community wellbeing, culture, economy, and the environment. This document envisions a future where everyone in the region can access, grow, and enjoy healthy, local, and sustainable food.





Through collective effort and cross-sectoral action, the Framework aims to achieve:

- Equitable access to nutritious and culturally significant food for all communities, including First Nations and culturally diverse groups.
- A thriving local food economy supported by sustainable practices.
- Improved community food literacy, empowerment, and wellbeing.
- Reduced environmental impacts from food and waste.
- Stronger collaboration and leadership across sectors.
- Recognition and action on the links between food justice and gender justice, building a food system that challenges inequity and supports all people.

The Framework has been shaped through extensive consultation across a number of years across the seven local government areas. It reflects local voices, lived experiences, and cultural perspectives. It builds upon examples from both local and other regional areas and the actions aim to support and amplify current and future projects in food systems.

By working together across all sectors and embedding food systems into planning and policy, our region and our communities can build a resilient, equitable, and sustainable food system that benefits people, culture, economy, and environment—now and into the future.

Background

Food Systems as a term “encompass the production, processing, packaging, distribution, consumption and disposal of food and beverages, as well as related social, cultural and governance systems”
(CSIRO, 2023).

Food Systems

As an approach it moves from considering food beyond just a health determinant (healthy eating rates) but rather how the interconnected elements are linked to understand the variety of outcomes and influences seen in day to day life. Outcomes and impacts of the Food System include health (nutrition and food security), society (culture, livelihoods and employment), environment (erosion, biodiversity loss, greenhouse gas emissions, pollution, food loss and waste) and economy (production, trade and wealth accumulation). By taking a multi-sectoral approach, it enables stakeholders and actions to be connected, amplified and sustainable into the future.

Application of Food Systems within the wider Goulburn Valley Region

Considerations of Food Systems as an approach began in the wider Goulburn Valley catchment in 2020 prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic which brought food security to the forefront. The crisis highlighted the complexity of the issue – including the ongoing impacts of climate change which led to a shared understanding that addressing challenges at a systems level would deliver greater long-term benefits. This work originally began under two Primary Care Partnerships (Goulburn Valley and Lower Hume). In this period, a Masters student was utilised to develop a discussion paper to establish the evidence based and best approach to guide the work.

After the amalgamations of Primary Care Partnerships into Local Public Health Units in 2022, this work then was facilitated by Goulburn Valley Public Health Unit (GVPHU) and encompassed seven Local Government Areas (LGA's). Some LGA's had previously been engaged within the Food System work in the North East area, which enabled support, guidance and funding as well as bringing connections to the wider area to learn and adapt well established work.

An established working group at the time, using the students research developed a project brief which identified success in using the United Nations Collaborative Framework for Food Systems Transformation.

In 2023, a new Reference Group was established, bringing together key representatives from across the catchment to guide the development of the Framework. The group supported consultation and engagement activities, while contributing insights and expertise to strengthen the broader food systems approach. For a list of agencies involved please see acknowledgment section.

This document does not stand alone. At a State-wide level it leverages off the *Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2023-2027* under the Healthy eating and Tackling climate change and it's impacts on health priority areas, *VicHealth's 10-year Strategy and Towards a Health, Regenerative and Equitable Food System in Victoria, A consensus statement*. At a Regional and local level, this framework feeds into and amplifies current and future plans and policies including but not limited to the *Hume Regional Climate Change Adaptation Strategy*, local Council and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans and local Community Health – Health Promotion plans. Linking in with the *Greater Bendigo Food System Strategy 2020-2030* and the *North East Local Food Strategy 2018-2022* provides context and understanding of the landscape our communities may live and experience due to close proximity.



Purpose

Vision

The Community Food Bowl Framework is reflective of the diverse needs of our communities. It envisions a future where everyone can grow, access and enjoy healthy, sustainable food – supporting the wellbeing of people, the environment and society now and into the future.

The vision considers food as a central part of daily life and long-term regional planning across the wider Goulburn Valley. It takes a systems-based approach, addressing all phases of the food system: from production, processing, and distribution, to retail, consumption, and resource recovery. The Framework has been shaped through local consultation and grounded in community language and lived experience.

This work has been developed for the wider Goulburn Valley; including the City of Greater Shepparton, Mansfield Shire, Mitchell Shire, Moira Shire, Murrindindi Shire, Strathbogie Shire, and Benalla Rural City. The Framework promotes collaborative, cross sectoral action, recognising that sustained improvement in the food systems requires alignment and cooperation across community, business and government sectors. The Community Food Bowl Framework's aim is to guide meaningful, future focused action that ensures healthy, local and sustainable food is available for and with our communities.



The purpose of the Community Food Bowl Framework is to deliver a holistic approach for actions, working with and for the community, business and government sectors to improve access to healthy, sustainable and local food for the region, leading to improved outcomes for all communities within the wider Goulburn Valley region.

Outcomes

Long term outcomes of a successful framework and implementation by and across our community may include;

- Ensuring all communities, particularly those facing social or economic challenges, can access healthy food
- Empowered and educated community members experiencing the benefits of healthy food
- Addressing the challenges of environmental impacts within food production
- Middle infrastructure and production assets that are available locally
- Sustainable practices are adopted across the food system and local food-related businesses are thriving and better prepared to adapt to change
- Food systems as an approach is considered across multiple sectors and stakeholders through leadership, commitment and action within the region
- Strengthened community leadership and representation in decision making, advocacy, resource allocation and local food system actions
- The region is identifying and sharing funding opportunities between organisations, sectors and groups to deliver on the actions within the framework
- An identifiable brand as to who the wider Goulburn Valley and Community Food Bowl is and how it is accessed by community and stakeholders
- Food is identified as a priority within local planning including government and community
- There is increased consumption of fruit and vegetables focusing on local food being accessible and available
- The links between food justice and gender justice are recognised and acted upon, building a food system that challenges inequity and supports the wellbeing of all people
- Data across the catchment is tracked and the area is able to capture the story, experience and outcomes of the local food system
- Providing opportunities for First Nations and culturally diverse communities to access high quality culturally significant foods locally.

Region





The wider Goulburn Valley area encompasses the Local Government Areas of City of Greater Shepparton, Mansfield Shire, Mitchell Shire, Moira Shire, Murrindindi Shire, Strathbogie Shire, and Benalla Rural City.

The GVPHU catchment is large and diverse, embracing river flats, floodplains, wetlands dry grasslands and Alpine districts, from Kilmore in the far south-west to Yarrawonga in the far north-east. As of 2022, the catchment has an estimated total population of 199,598 (3.1% of the total Victorian population of 6,548,040). The two largest local government areas by population are Greater Shepparton, a regional city, and Mitchell Shire on the urban fringes of Melbourne. The smallest local government areas by population are Strathbogie and Mansfield, both of which consist of a largely dispersed rural population with small regional centres. Notable features include the iconic agricultural “food bowl”, the Shepparton Irrigation District, major food processing industry and prominent tourist areas in both the Alpine region and to the south.

Population growth over the next 15 years is expected to increase in the catchment (32%) with significant growth predicted in the southern part (Mitchell Shire). Population on average is ageing with 28% aged 60 years and older compared to 22% Victorian average. Across the catchment, adults meeting the fruit intake guidelines ranged from 33-49% with 5/7 LGA's being below Victorian average and on average only 8% of the catchment meeting the vegetable intake, comparable to the state average.

Every LGA in the GVPHU catchment has a higher percentage of the population that identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander compared to the state-wide percentage of 1%, with the lowest proportion in Mansfield (1.1%) and the highest proportion in Greater Shepparton (3.9%). 14% of the catchment population are born overseas, with the largest culturally diverse populations residing in the Greater Shepparton and Mitchell LGAs. Within the Greater Shepparton, Moira and nearby Campaspe region, food and grocery made up 55.8% of the regions manufacturing turnover and employed 4, 139 people in the regions.

Consultation

Development of the Framework was guided by the *United Nations Collaborative Framework for Food Systems Transformation*, following Actions 1 to 3 of the methodology. Future planning for Action 4 within the UN Framework is outlined in Long Term Purpose.

To ensure the Framework was reflective of community needs, interest and is relevant to the local context, a period of consultation occurred between 2023 – 2025. During this time consultations included community surveys, data and desktop research, attending network meetings, stalls at community events, policy and guideline mapping for alignment and opportunistic consultations with communities through networks and connections.

The Reference Group provided 134 engagement points, with 55 organisations/agencies and 107 people across the catchment during 2023 – 2025. This is in addition to a formal community survey (180 responses) and focus groups and interviews (four focus groups with 13 stakeholders) completed by Sustain Australia as part of their consultant work.

Figure 1 Engagement Map





Having a planned and targeted consultation approach was a key priority of the Framework development to ensure local voices, experiences and stories were heard to understand what actions should be included to drive activity for the region. This was alongside an open and adaptive approach to new connections, networks and understanding how community connected to the wider food system in the region. Engaging in a food system approach is an innovative and new approach for the region and sought to understand how food is viewed, accessed and utilised and what it means to the community, to ensure the appropriate stakeholders are brought together long term for embedded change.

During the consultation process, it was recognised having a localised adaptation of the academic understanding of Food Systems would be beneficial for local contexts and how the elements of Food Systems as outlined by the CSIRO 2023 interplay within the wider Goulburn Valley.

Figure 2 demonstrates this local adaptation.



Figure 2 Local Food System



Long Term Actions and Purpose

This framework recognises that change very rarely happens overnight or by one individual or organisation alone. To meet our vision of healthy, sustainable and local food for the region, multiple stakeholders, organisations and community members are needed to act across the spectrum of food system work. Collective action through a connected, systems-based approach enables long term change and helps ensure positive outcomes are accessible to all communities.

The purpose of this Framework is to help guide community action across the food system spectrum to drive better outcomes for community long term. It is intended to be used to guide policies, practices and connected activities that support a resilient and healthy Food System now and into the future. The next stage of the Community Food Bowl Framework will focus on establishing action tracking and governance oversight to ensure ongoing relevance, appropriateness and sustained commitment to implementation across the catchment.

Using this document

Within the Framework, there are five key themes:

- Supply and Production,
- Access,
- Consumption,
- Food Waste and Resource Recovery and
- Food System Knowledge.

Each area is outlined below with descriptions of what this area covers. Any community group, organisation or individual are encouraged to assess which of the key themes is relevant to their work or action, then use the sub-actions to help guide activity.

There are 39 general key areas overall, to be considered when utilising a Food System approach within the wider Goulburn Valley. Listed sub-actions outline specific activities that can be undertaken to support and implement action within these areas. This is not an exhaustive list and can be built upon with further actions that support, promote and encourage action in the local food system.





1

Supply and Production

This theme encompasses where our food is grown, processed and goes to, including selling. This can include the academic food system areas of production, processing and distribution.

Growing and its practices



Processing



Distribution



In a local context this means areas such as; large scale growing, artisan value adding producers (e.g. small-scale producers) backyard or community gardens and overall growing practices. Waste can also be considered including management along production lines and finding opportunities for diversification of selling product. Processing is considered in manufacturing or value adding e.g. canning. Distribution has cross over between Supply and Production and Access themes, for example where does our food go to be purchased, utilised and accessed by community?

1

Community Food Infrastructure including community-based locations, assets and social infrastructure

- 1.1 Support to develop, implement and maintain community gardens (or community food enterprises) that are suitable for community needs, interest, cultural relevancy and accessibility as appropriate.
- 1.2 Utilisation of assets that have co-benefits. This can include community gardens based in locations such as community houses to have dual purpose of actions within sites and wider community access.
- 1.3 Mapping of assets that are available for community to use to build awareness. This can include locations, who the audience is and what food is shared, used etc. Examples may include community kitchens and spaces for gathering (community meals and markets).
- 1.4 Identifying and utilising assets within local settings to promote growing and access to food. This may include planter boxes with food to share, trees planted that include fruit growing or verge (nature strip) growing.

2

Education settings as key assets for knowledge and growth

- 2.1 Support school/education-based settings to engage, educate and utilise food. This can include gardens on site, education regarding sustainability and food waste.

3

Middle Infrastructure

- 3.1 Addressing the need for local middle infrastructure such as locations to process and store food items and networks to support smaller scale growers to be able to find options to sell (soft infrastructure). This may be done in a co-operative style or other as suitable.

4

Culturally Significant Food

- 4.1 Access to spaces and locations to grow food that is of cultural significance and relevancy to community.
- 4.2 Build and continue relationships with First Nations and culturally diverse communities to develop understanding, awareness and collaboration opportunities that support and promote First Nations and culturally diverse group's owned businesses, keeping strong cultural ties to food.
- 4.3 Finding opportunities to promote the importance of continuing storytelling and knowledge of biodiversity, and traditional knowledge of food.

5

Home Based Growing

- 5.1 Supporting communities at home with growing backyard gardens including supporting waste reduction actions such as composting and understanding biohazard reduction techniques.

6

Innovative Models for Small Scale Production

- 6.1 Support opportunities for innovative models for land sharing and co-operational style land sharing. This may be through engaging local farmers and agriculture industry and supporting innovation that enhances access to food produced locally.

7

Logistics Understanding

- 7.1 Increasing understanding and support for logistics and movement of food. This includes awareness of market availability and supporting the ability to distribute and move food locally.

8

Town Planning, Local Laws and Regulation

- 8.1 Consideration of food within integrated planning including land usage and ensuring adequate resourcing for food for the future.
- 8.2 Build understanding of local laws and regulations regarding farm gate opportunities and leverage opportunities for adaptations as required.

9

Mapping of Local Production

- 9.1 Utilisation of existing resources to identify where local produce is being made and supplied, and can be purchased from.

10

Emerging Industries

- 10.1 Supporting new and small-scale businesses related to food to promote local food production. This can include grants for circular economies, social enterprise models, promotion of adaptive technologies and mentoring for small to medium enterprises.

11 Climate Adaptation

- 11.1 Protection of natural assets to support food production and resources. This can include ensuring water is available through allocations as well as recycled options and protection against emerging biohazards such as fruit flies.
- 11.2 Responding to need and understanding the impact of changing climates on food environments including agricultural health.

12 Circular Economies

- 12.1 Promotion of circular economy models to promote the benefits and co-benefits for the production sector including but not limited to climate considerations, waste reduction and cost savings. For example, create a Circular Economy Toolkit, detailing grant opportunities, technology providers and case studies.

13 Future Sustainability of Agriculture

- 13.1 Promotion of workforce opportunities within the region to maintain capacity and future sustainability of the agricultural workforce.
- 13.2 Support existing community and producer groups such as Landcare in their role in supporting and promoting sustainable agriculture.

Case study: The Mansfield Fresh Food Drive - Mansfield District Hospital

The Mansfield Fresh Food Drive has been operating twice a month since its inception in 2021, from a Mansfield RESPOND initiative to encourage healthy eating and community connection. Volunteers from St. John's Anglican Church and Mansfield District Hospital coordinate the receipt and distribution of locally grown produce, including

a range of seasonal fruit, vegetables, herbs, preserves, seeds, seedlings and eggs, to the community.

All produce is produced locally in backyards, both in and around Mansfield, including the local Youth Centre and in the grounds of the St. John's Church. The produce donated is fresh, seasonal and boasts 'ZERO food miles' and is free to anyone in the community. Left-over produce is distributed through the Christian Fellowship's Loaves & Fishes Food Pantry and Mansfield Community Cubby House (childcare centre). Any monetary donations are used to purchase staple foods such as potatoes & carrots from local farmers, when available, to add variety.

It is a popular event for parents with children of all ages, people with disabilities, students, people on low incomes and the elderly. Those surveyed report that it has increased their consumption of fresh food, the variety of fresh foods they consume and reduced grocery bills.

The Fresh Food Drive has become a valued event in the community and an opportunity for people to connect with each other, exchange recipes and growing tips, to try new foods and to have a go at growing food themselves.





2

Access

Access refers to how are people purchasing, receiving and procuring their food. This may encompass retail outlets, supermarkets, food relief, markets, cafes, canteens and redistribution of excess food. Provision of food in settings such as schools or neighbourhood houses can also be considered in this theme as well as community programs.

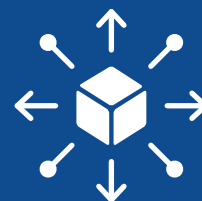
Purchasing, receiving
and procurement



Policies and guidelines



Distribution



Another consideration is the inclusion of diverse needs, which may encompass religious, cultural and dietary sensitivities or requirements. Distribution also falls within this theme for example where sites procure their food items. Policies guiding procurements, layout of sites (e.g. eye line of products) and availability or provision of items is also considered within this theme.

14

Community Food Infrastructure (including community-based locations, assets and social infrastructure)

- 14.1 Provide services to enable local community access to settings that support food access and consumption. This can include community buses to access community centres/houses for implementation and maintenance of community gardens that are reflective of community need.
- 14.2 Food drop off points to reduce waste and promote sharing of home-grown produce. This may include assets such as food shacks or drop off/collection points.
- 14.3 Explore opportunities for farmers markets to support and promote local produce and create opportunities for networks to be created. Considerations regarding locations and frequency to ensure viability of the markets, consistency to ensure awareness for the public and locations are suitable for access.

15

Middle Infrastructure

- 15.1 Find opportunities for shared (co-op) locations (hard infrastructure) to promote and sell local produce.
- 15.2 Establish and support local food hub opportunities. Benefits of promoting local food and providing opportunity to sell to local consumers.
- 15.3 Support and promotion of local food access outlets (e.g. farm gates, fresh food retailers, farmers markets, food hubs/co-ops online retail programs etc.) locations to be able to sell and purchase locally grown foods. Considerations should include local laws and guidelines regarding the management of these sites.

16

Policies, Guidelines and Procurement

- 16.1 Implementation of place and settings-based approaches for relevant policies and guidelines to increase food security and resilience across the region such as supporting healthy eating initiatives and their long-term sustainability. This includes but is not limited to healthy eating workplace policies, procurement models, promotion of local healthy businesses and following guidelines and standards for appropriate settings.
- 16.2 Understanding, investigating and promotion of procurement models that support local produce to be bought and supplied locally. This may include but not limited to hospitals, hospitality, schools and other services that use large scale food procurement shared portals.
- 16.3 Incentivising council partnerships to support adoption of the Victorian Government's healthy and more sustainable food retail and procurement policies in public settings, including early childhood services, workplaces, public facilities, health services and schools (supported by the Healthy Eating Advisory Service).

17

State-wide Programs

- 17.1 Uptake of state-wide food access and healthy eating programs to support system changes, encourage healthier provision of items and support healthy eating rates to increase. This includes but is not limited to *Vic Kids Eat Well*, *Breakfast Club Programs*, *Achievement Program*, *Healthy Choices Policy Directives* and *Catering for Good* directory.

18

Town Planning

- 18.1 Consideration of locations and density of food entities to ensure food deserts are not established.

19

Food Security & Relief Considerations

- 19.1 Expand on partnerships for local food relief to reduce food mileage and support local networks and ensure sustainability.
- 19.2 Encourage strong connections across the food relief sector to build viable relationships between large relief peak bodies and local organisations and groups.
- 19.3 Data collection to understand food insecurity rates and scale of issue within regional locations. This would include advocacy, awareness raising and standardisation of data collection methods.
- 19.4 Map needs and opportunities across existing delivery models and infrastructure, and understand what is needed to improve the connectivity of our food system through considering logistics (hard middle infrastructure).
- 19.5 Support the long-term sustainability of community assets including community volunteers to ensure projects are supported and enabled locally.
- 19.6 Consideration of guidelines and policies to ensure food relief is provided in a healthy, sustainable and culturally appropriate and significant manner for communities. This may include utilising the Department of Family, Fairness and Housing's *Healthy Food Relief Guidelines 2024*.
- 19.7 Considerations and promoting of dignified, rights-based approaches and food resilience-based models within food relief. This may include embedding within food relief practices or adapting food relief models to food security approaches (including food hubs, community markets, community-based food vouchers, and social enterprise models).

20

Networks and Partnerships

- 20.1 Establish networks and partnership models for local producers and local businesses to support actions to ensure food is sustainable in nature (through growing practices) and consistent for consumers when required (e.g. available at consistent locations)

21

Emergency Preparedness

- 21.1 Ensure provision of and access to food is considered in emergency preparedness. This includes but not limited to ensuring emergency food is available that is culturally significant and that food safety training is provided prior to emergencies to ensure safe handling of food occurs.

Case study: Lifelong and Healthy Habits for Children - RDI Nutrition

It is well documented that Australian children consume inadequate amounts of fruits and vegetables. Here in the Food Bowl of Victoria – Greater Shepparton – a local Public Health Nutritionist was passionate about making a change to this statistic. Katie worked closely with Primary Schools, to establish and implement school-based programs that helped promote the consumption of healthy foods. In addition, educating children on basic

nutrition information, upskilling them in the kitchen, showing where and how food is grown and ensuring it was fun at all times.

Each Primary School is very different and has a unique cohort - some schools have a fully equipped kitchen to work from and others have nothing but a mixing bowl. These programs were tailored to suit the specific needs of the school and ensure the aim of the program was met consistently – all children experiencing positive exposures to nutritious and healthy foods.

Identifying foods as 'healthy' or 'unhealthy', simply isn't enough to generate excitement in children. They are emotive beings and need support in learning more deeply about food, why it's healthy for their bodies and promoting positive relationships with food, in a zero-pressure environment. These school-based programs focus on learning about healthy foods in a fun and relaxed environment – whether that be through games, planting seeds and observing their growth, creating delicious recipes or making art with their foods. Positive exposure to healthy foods is vital for children, as it supports their physical and mental growth and helps to establish lifelong, positive relationships with food.



A close-up photograph of several ripe purple plums in a woven basket. The plums are covered in a fine layer of white bloom. The basket is lined with a red and white checkered cloth. The background is a solid blue color.

3

Consumption

This theme includes the purchasing, consumption, resource recovery and minimisation of food waste in relation to the individual or household.

Purchasing
and provision



Consumption
rates



Drivers behind choice
(attitudes and beliefs)



This includes the retail environment and why people are choosing to purchase from these areas and the barriers and enablers to this. Drivers of choice should be considered including preference, marketing influence and price points. This theme considers consumption rates of healthy eating, food literacy and where people are consuming food.

22

Community Food Infrastructure (including community-based locations, assets and social infrastructure)

- 22.1 Utilisation of cooking classes and other avenues to support food skills, health literacy and awareness to community members. This may include being based within community locations such as neighbourhood houses.
- 22.2 Support the availability and awareness of assets to provide and consume healthier foods, for example listing where kitchens in community are for hire.

23

Local Food Branding Identity and Promotion

- 23.1 Establish and promote a local brand identity related to food to identify what is grown, processed and distributed locally.
- 23.2 Encouraging Farm to Table models (emphasizes the use of locally sourced ingredients, connecting producers to consumers), to encourage local food consumption but also with consideration of food miles to reduce climate impacts.
- 23.3 Promoting local industries/agencies to support where local healthy food can be purchased. For example, support uptake of the Catering for Good Directory to support local industries.
- 23.4 Agri-tourism for the Goulburn Valley region to promote local food identities. This can include events to highlight local food, branding activities to promote local collective actions and continued strengthening of Food Bowl identity.
- 23.5 Showcase local food providers and industries at community events to promote healthier options. This may include activations such as farmers markets or community celebration days.

24

Education settings as key assets for knowledge and growth

- 24.1 Holistically view food as a way to engage students and families, considering the wider impact food has on wellbeing. This can include provision of food onsite through meals, school gardens or utilising food in classes to build knowledge and skills.



25

Food as Coming Together (social/cultural asset)

- 25.1 Recognising food and food consumption, as a societal protective factor and broader cultural asset, which builds social connection and cohesion.
- 25.2 Supporting children's involvement in food preparation and choice to encourage food awareness and engagement within early childhood.

26

Health Literacy Skills and Knowledge Development

- 26.1 Improving food literacy skills including through public awareness, education programs or campaigns, school or other community food education programs, to improve local food knowledge and skills
- 26.2 Promoting and understanding seasonality of food, including the financial, nutritional and taste benefits of foods locally produced.
- 26.3 Minimising food waste through education and knowledge on how to utilise food effectively (zero waste consumption activities).
- 26.4 Ensuring cooking education (recipes, methods etc) is diversified in asset consideration (e.g. kitchen equipment availability) to ensure communities in all living arrangements can increase food literacy and skills to make healthy meals.

27

Environment Considerations

- 27.1 Promotional campaigns, marketing and advertisement of food to children. This can include considerations regarding minimising advertisement of unhealthy foods to children within settings they live and play as well as sponsorship considerations of sporting and other activities.

28

Amplification of Established Programs

- 28.1 Support, amplify and ensure sustainability of established programs that support consumption and access to healthy food, reducing food waste and facilitating social connection across the regions.

4

Food Waste and Resource Recovery

This theme considers food waste and resource recovery across the food system spectrum (where not already identified above) as this should be considered along the supply chain, in accessing food and post consumption areas.

29 Partnership and Understanding Across Sectors

- 29.1 Using evidence-based approaches to reduce food waste and partnering with academia to support trialling of innovative models to reduce waste. This may include building an understanding of barriers along supply chains in uptake of established programs such as council green bins.
- 29.2 Inter-council (regional) partnerships to support waste education and delivery models to share resources, learnings and networks.
- 29.3 Consideration of food waste and resource recovery as co-benefits within cross-departmental actions that require collaboration.

For example, private industries taking up green waste options benefits resource recovery leading to economic benefit to the business and councils by utilising council waste assets.

30 Settings Based Approaches

- 30.1 Uptake of established programs that support sustainability within settings. For example, schools using Sustainability Victoria's *ResourceSmart Schools* program. This provides tailored support to reduce resource use, make cost savings and embed sustainability into the curriculum based on individual school circumstances.
- 30.2 Supporting settings to have the resources available and uptake to be able to reduce food waste, for example establishing composting systems or uptake of green bins if available.

31 Food Relief

- 31.1 Awareness and establishment of networks and strong partnerships for local food relief so when excess food is identified there are clear pathways to donate or use food to avoid waste. Inclusion of the promotion of the social benefits of food donation comparative to waste.

32 Challenging Aesthetic Standards

- 32.1 Marketing and promotion of the diversity of what food can look like that is still nutritious and edible.

33 Sustainability Planning

- 33.1 Future planning and considerations within sustainability plans and inclusion of food as a consideration both in assets, commercial factors and future climate adaptations.

34 Workforce Training

- 34.1 Support for food producers in workforce training to improve harvesting and packing practices and greater investment in improved on-farm as well as shared storage infrastructure.

35 Amplification of Established Programs

- 35.1 Support and encourage uptake of established programs that can be utilised by community. This may include but not limited to campaigns such as *Love Food Hate Waste* from Sustainability Victoria or identify opportunities from *The Path to Half* document.

36 Supporting Local Networks and Initiatives

- 36.1 Local initiatives to share knowledge, reduce waste through sharing of home-grown produce and create networks to connect regarding food.

Case study: Culturally Familiar Foods Project – University of Melbourne

When University of Melbourne students Ruta Pendse and Chantelle Ly arrived in Shepparton in March 2025, they were welcomed into gardens, kitchens, and conversations across the Goulburn Valley. Over three months, guided by the University's Engagement and Partnership team, they set out to understand how culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities grow and share the foods that connect them to home.

Through interviews and site visits, they heard stories of families tending small backyard plots, parents teaching their children about the fruits and vegetables they miss, and community groups experimenting with co-operative models. At the same time, many shared the challenges they face—lack of secure land, high costs, limited time,

and growing conditions so different from their countries of origin.

Despite these barriers, one message came through strongly: culturally familiar foods are more than ingredients. They are anchors of identity, sources of health and wellbeing, and a way to keep culture alive.

The students' research compared backyard, community, and co-operative models, and offered practical pathways to strengthen access through shared spaces, skill-building, and local support. Most importantly, it showed the power of collaboration—where academic insight and student energy help amplify community voices and grow a more inclusive, resilient food system for the Goulburn Valley.

5

Food Systems Knowledge

This theme includes the promotion, understanding and calls to action to support and implement a food systems approach. This theme recognises the system enablers required to drive change holistically, and understands that food is often viewed in a siloed manner, or from a variety of individual lenses, dependant on where stakeholders are connected to the system.

The actions within this theme address how to embed this approach into long-term planning at a systems level for sustainable change.

37 Education and Awareness of Food Systems

- 37.1 Find and deliver opportunities to raise awareness of food systems as an approach. This includes ensuring education is provided and multiple sectors are involved to enable collaboration, connections and opportunities for shared action.
- 37.2 Highlighting where food systems as an approach intersects with various stakeholders to demonstrate the breadth of involvement and how community can be involved.
- 37.3 Advocating for state and federal consideration of a food system approach.

38 Oversight and Governance

- 38.1 Enable oversight and governance for a food system network, including sustainable funding opportunities to ensure the long-term embedment of this approach within the wider Goulburn Valley catchment.
- 38.2 Building and supporting equitable, collaborative and diverse food system leadership across the wider Goulburn Valley to drive systemic change.

39 Evidence Base and Data Systems

- 39.1 Sharing knowledge and evidence of good practice and innovation with potential for scale. Facilitating enhanced collaboration between stakeholders to drive food systems transformation together, including strategic business planning and management.
- 39.2 Establish shared indicators and outcomes that can be tracked to show change over time and impact reach of approaches.
- 39.3 Inclusion and partnership with academia to ensure an ongoing evidence base is continually being built and work is supported by evidence-based practice.
- 39.4 Utilisation of tools to track where action is currently happening and where there may be opportunities for action to be undertaken, for example the *Food Policy Index* tool.

Appendix 1: Recognition and links

The Community Food Bowl Framework is intended for use across community, organisations and sectors within the wider Goulburn Valley area. This document links in to various local, regional and state level plans, strategies, policies and resources. The list is current at the time of publishing and is not exhaustive. There may be updates or additional documents over the coming years.

- Flourish Regional Food System Framework 2024
- Greater Bendigo Food System Strategy 2020-2030
- Goulburn Broken Regional Catchment Strategy 2021-2027
- Goulburn Murray Climate Alliance 2022-2026 Strategic Plan
- Hume Regional Climate Change Adaptation Strategy November 2021
- Local Community Health – Health Promotion Strategic and annual action plans
- Local Council and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans 2025 – 2029
- North East Food System Strategy (Update coming)
- VicHealth Strategy: The next 10 years 2023-2033: Reshaping systems together for a healthier, fairer Victoria.
- Department of Health: Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2023–27

Appendix 2: Acknowledgements

The Community Food Bowl Framework was developed and assisted through a local Reference Group. The facilitation team would like to acknowledge the work from these organisations to assist in the development and consultation in this work through their expertise, networks and local oversight.

Agriculture Victoria, Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action



Department of Families, Fairness and Housing



ETHNIC COUNCIL OF SHEPPARTON AND DISTRICT Inc.



Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-operative



Strathbogrie SHIRE COUNCIL



WOMEN'S HEALTH Goulburn North East

Additionally, thank you to the following organisations and networks for their support:

- Flourish network and the Healthy Loddon Campaspe team
- Sustain: The Australian Food Network

Appreciation and acknowledgement are extended to any organisation, business, community member and group who shared stories, their experiences and vision to help guide this work.

The GVPHU is funded through the Victorian Department of Health. The facilitation of this work was enabled through this funding model as part of GVPHU's work in the Improving Healthy Eating priority area. The GVPHU has provided the platform for this document to be written, however it is the input, knowledge and experiences of our partners and community who have brought this document to life.

For further information or to connect in with the Framework you can email PHUhealthplanning@gvhealth.org.au

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