

GREAT SOUTHERN (ALBANY) FOOD ACTION GROUPS

Stakeholder Focus Group | Early Feedback Report



Authors

Jess Doe

Edith Cowan University

Sarah Goodwin

Edith Cowan University

Professor Amanda Devine

Edith Cowan University

Associate Professor Melissa Stoneham

Public Health Advocacy Institute, Curtin University

Dr Stephanie Godrich

Edith Cowan University

This report can be cited as:

Doe, J., Goodwin, S., Devine, A., Stoneham, M & Godrich, S.L. (2023). Great Southern (Albany) Food Action Groups: Stakeholder Focus Group Early Feedback Report. Perth, Western Australia: Edith Cowan University

For enquiries about this report, contact:

Dr Stephanie Godrich

Chief Investigator, Edith Cowan University

s.godrich@ecu.edu.au

Acknowledgement:

The Food Community team would like to thank all participants for their valuable contributions and time towards this project, and for their ongoing efforts in supporting food security across Western Australia.

The Issue

All people need food in sufficient amounts, and of good quality, to meet their dietary needs. It can be challenging for some people to have guaranteed physical, social and economic access to healthy and affordable food (food security). At a community level, this means residents can obtain a safe, nutritious diet produced through a sustainable food system that maximises healthy choices, supports cultural and taste preferences, and provides everyone with equal food access.

The Background

The Food Community project, aims to identify, map, evaluate and strengthen initiatives supporting food security. The [Food Community website](#) helps to bring people interested in working in food security together to learn more about food security and how to support it, in a coordinated and collaborative way. However, for sustainability, a governance approach is required to progress food security action. Food Action Groups offer an excellent 'where to from here' solution to this problem.

Food Action Groups have been helping community members and people working in food security to get involved in food system decision-making in Europe, the UK and North America for over 20 years. Stakeholders collaborate to implement activities like nutrition programs, social supermarkets, and getting locally produced food into hospitals, aged care centres and school meals (among others). No such Food Action Group model exists in regional Western Australia. This is a clear gap that presents us with an opportunity for innovation.



LOCATION

Great Southern, Western Australia

The Great Southern region is located on the south coast of WA, covers 39,007 square kilometres and includes 13 local government authorities [1].

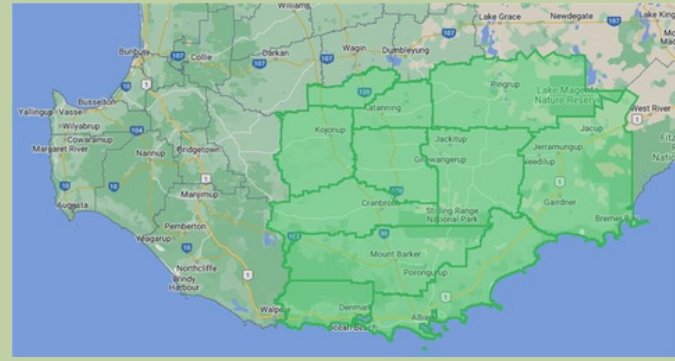


Figure 1. Great Southern, Western Australia [2]

Current Status

Great Southern focus groups were held in June 2023, where the team shared their findings from an international review of Food Action Groups' activities, and sought feedback on preferences for an ideal Food Action Groups model, the key stakeholders to be involved in its creation, potential barriers, and funders.

What we heard...

What a good food pathway looks like...

Accessible and affordable healthy foods; educated consumers connecting paddock to plate and understanding food content; good infrastructure for local food distribution; and more direct food pathways.

When the food pathway works, why does it work?

Local support and utilisation of local produce; independent supermarkets supporting local growers; restaurants featuring local produce on their menus raising awareness about locally produced food; FOGO initiative addressing waste management; and the farmers' market supporting local producers and building connections within the community.

Great Southern Food Problems...

Dominance of large supermarket chains impacting local food distribution; consumer trend towards convenience foods; supermarkets influencing consumer choices towards pre-packaged and ready-made meals; decline in food literacy knowledge and skills; and challenges for farmers' markets around operating times, rules and competitors.

Proposed Food Action Group Activities...

- Creation of a local food hub to streamline local food distribution, including supply for the local Food Bank.
- Facilitate nutrition education (healthy choices and sustainable eating) in schools and the community.
- Decrease food waste through value-adding opportunities composing and worm farms.
- Making healthy food accessible and affordable, in particular for disadvantaged groups (e.g. people experiencing homelessness).
- Explore the role of plant based proteins and innovative food solutions in addressing local food issues.

Proposed Structure...

Established as a not-for-profit; community driven with a committee (representation from across the food pathway); and a holistic approach addressing issues across all components of the food pathway.

Stakeholders...

Local government; growing groups; retailers (supermarkets); health organisations (e.g. WA Country Health Service); restaurant owners; and community members ('champions').

Perceived Barriers...

Time restraints among group members; long term commitment; using evidence to drive action (not reinventing the wheel); funding; and buy-in from the community.

“

Instead of Perth being the central point for warehousing distribution, we have a local warehousing distribution centre.

”

Where to from here?

We are now looking into our findings from the Great Southern and other WA regions more deeply. Once complete, we'll commence identifying suitable funding for the establishment of one or more Food Action Groups in the Great Southern.

Follow the project through Facebook and sign up to the Food Community website today!



foodcommunity@ecu.edu.au



[@ecufoodcommunity](https://www.facebook.com/ecufoodcommunity)



www.foodcommunity.com.au

References:

1. WA Country Health Service. Great Southern regional profile. From: <https://www.wacountry.health.wa.gov.au/Our-services/Great-Southern/Great-Southern-regional-profile>, 2021.
2. Great Southern Western Australia. Adapted from REMPLAN MapBuilder, <https://mapbuilder.remplan.com.au/?link=10dcdc50-d04f-4b3f-bbf8-5ec1198b79db>