

GOLDFIELDS (ESPERANCE) FOOD ACTION GROUPS

Stakeholder Focus Group | Early Feedback Report



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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 | Goldfields, Western Australia

The Goldfields region is located in the south eastern corner of WA, covers 770,488 square kilometres and includes 8 local government areas [1].

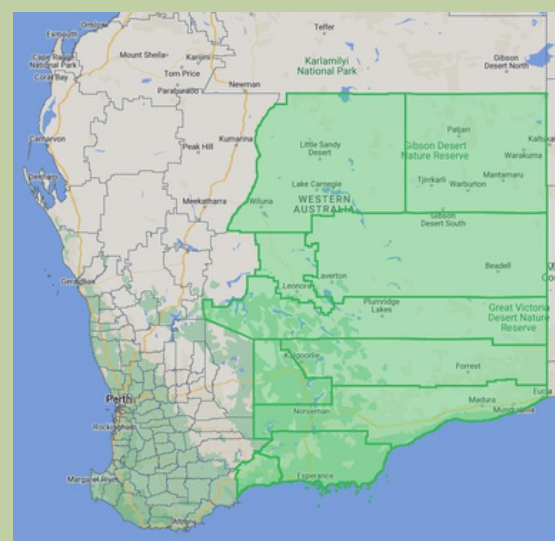


Figure 1. Goldfields Western Australia [2]

Current Status

Goldfields focus groups were held in November 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...

A sustainable pathway with a secure distribution route; and access to affordable healthy food, in quantities that meets the community's needs.

When the food pathway works, why does it work?

Ability to access information about food through origin labelling; technology has enhanced efficiency of food growing; government is encouraging more local food processing; local growers' market and vegetable box delivery initiative; and generosity among community members to assist people in need.

Goldfields Food Problems...

Limited access to fresh produce, as little grown in the region; all components of the food pathway are currently understaffed; high rates of work-related accidents across the pathway; distribution routes interrupted by weather events and road accidents, negatively impacting availability of food in supermarkets; cost of water due to no supply pipeline across the region; and large quantity of food wasted due to lack of sustainable food surplus program.



Proposed Food Action Group Activities...

- Enhance awareness of and strengthen collaboration between existing local initiatives.
- Conduct a needs assessment to explore local food related issues and barriers.
- Support primary producers to increase local food production.
- Increase availability of fresh produce through an everyday farmers market.
- Advocate for a community kitchen to support food businesses (production and processing).
- Assist with upcoming FOGO waste system community education.
- Encourage establishment of community gardens and seed swapping initiatives.

Proposed Structure...

Embedded within an existing organisation or local shire, with an employed coordinator; and potentially multiple smaller groups (one in each local government area) to report on localised issues and build collaboration across the region.

Stakeholders...

Local and state government; retailers (supermarkets) and other local food businesses; the local growers' group and farmers market committee; food relief organisations (e.g. Esperance Care Services); and Esperance Chamber of Commerce and Industries.

Perceived Barriers...

Funding; members current work loads; lack of coordination of stakeholders and their conflicting priorities; reliance on volunteers (and their burnout); and limited understanding of existing barriers.

“ *[Produce] is not always that fresh once it gets to Esperance... or available, particularly in busy tourist season when the shelves are empty. Having a seven-days-a-week... farmers' market... where everything is fresh... and lasts in your fridge for a month... would be great.* ”

Where to from here?

We are now looking into our findings from the Goldfields 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 Goldfields.

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



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www.foodcommunity.com.au

References:

1. WA Country Health Service. Goldfields regional profile. From: <https://www.wacountry.health.wa.gov.au/Our-services/Goldfields/Goldfields-regional-profile>, 2023.
2. Goldfields Western Australia. Adapted from REMPLAN MapBuilder, <https://mapbuilder.remplan.com.au/?link=10dcdc50-d04f-4b3f-bbf8-5ec1198b79db>