



## Exploring Food Citizenship in Melbourne, Australia: opportunities for supporting a resilient food system

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### ABSTRACT

The globalized food system is characterized by major improvements in productivity, processing, distribution and food safety. However, the demand of the growing population continues to put pressure on intensifying production, while the triple burden of malnutrition, socioeconomic and environmental problems persists. These complex issues need to be addressed through a democratic process with the active participation of citizens. This paper explores how food citizenship can aid the transformation of the food system in the Australian context. The area of food citizenship was investigated through qualitative interviews with experts on each level of the Socio-ecological framework and extensive review of the literature. The findings suggest that ethical consumerism can be an important driver for enacting change, but is currently hindered by lower awareness of the implications of the current food system and lack of government regulations in labelling and certifications, market competition and pricing. Furthermore, urban agriculture can play a crucial role in developing local, diversified networks to ensure future food security, therefore providing gardening opportunities and food literacy education for the Australian citizens is seen as essential. This paper offers only a limited initial investigation into the context around food citizenship in Australia, thus there is a need for further research to be able to advise the policy-making process.

Key words: food citizenship, sustainable food system, ethical consumption, urban gardening

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## Abbreviations

AFSA - Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance

FAO - Food and Agriculture Organization

FC - food citizenship

FP - food policy

FS - food system

GHG - greenhouse gas emissions

## Aknowledgements

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# 1. Background

## 1.1. Global food system

The modern food system (FS) is characterized by vast, globalized networks and has undergone rapid development since the 1960s with Green Revolution bringing technological innovation and an intensified use of natural resources, to major improvements in productivity, processing, distribution and food safety (FAO, 2017) (IPES-Food, 2016). It faces a complex and often conflicting set of challenges where the demand of the growing population puts pressure on sustainable production and the existence of triple burden of malnutrition, characterized by the prevalence of undernourished, overweight and micronutrient deficient people throughout the developed and developing world (FAO, 2017). In order to satisfy the growing demand, the FS has become highly industrialized and dependent on fossil fuels, where the bulk of it is controlled by multinational corporations, driving migration from rural communities into the cities (FAO, 2017). Even though the system has brought a lot of people out of hunger, it still affects 800 million people and there are an estimated two billion people suffering from micronutrient deficiencies (FAO, 2017). This, coupled with the trend of urbanization, has created a large gap between the food producer and the consumer, which has a number of negative impacts like food waste, loss of cultural identity, environmental damage, etc (O’Kane, 2011).

### **1.1.1. Implications**

#### 1.1.1.1. Environmental implications

The environmental impacts of food production and distribution have been well-documented in recent years. Overproduction in highly industrialized countries as the USA and Australia have lead to soil erosion, salinity and acidity (O’Kane, 2011) and on a global scale 33% of agricultural land is moderately to highly degraded (FAO, 2017). Moreover, the sector is already responsible for around 80% of deforestation, so there is not much room for further expansion, even that the demand

for land is growing, especially with the recent trend to use oil crops for biofuels and aquaculture feed (FAO, 2017).

The intensified food production and distribution contributes to greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) on all steps of the chain, from deforestation, soil management, energy use, livestock breeding, transport, processing, packaging and storage to waste management and is estimated to cause around 26% of global emission (FAO, 2017).

Another crucial resource that is very negatively impacted is water, both by redirecting it from other use (70% of total water use) for irrigation and by polluting it through fertilizers and pesticides leaching (O’Kane, 2011). These issues combined with the rapid deforestation and monocropping lead to habitat disruption and a major loss of biodiversity (IPES-Food, 2016). According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (2017) more than 40% of rural population live in water scarce areas and as rainfall and temperatures are expected to fluctuate, there are higher chances for droughts.

Finally, the modern food system is both a major contributor to climate change while being also highly affected by it, since extreme weather changes affect yields, and it is projected that it will affect negatively “per capita calorie availability”, especially in developing countries (FAO, 2017).

#### 1.1.1.2. Socioeconomic implications

The modern food system also has negative social and economic impacts. The distance created between farmer and consumer has led to the diminishing quantity and quality of social relationships, civic participation, reciprocity and trust (O’Kane, 2011). On one side, the consumer is less concerned with the production methods and their effects, while on the other the farmer is responding more to economic pressures of demand (O’Kane, 2011). Furthermore, small food producers and especially females, have limited access to the market, due to unavailable credits and liquidity and rarely raise above sustenance level (IPES-Food, 2016). Additionally, the rural populations are aging worldwide, with the migration of youth towards the cities, who can experience more effects of ill-health and discrimination when it comes to receiving credits and access to innovation (FAO, 2017).

A major economic impact from climate change and diminishing yields is the increase of global food prices and research indicates that there is a connection between these increased pressures and conflicts, especially in developing countries (FAO, 2017).

#### 1.1.1.3. Health

Another direct outcome of the industrialized food production, which prioritizes energy density over nutrient density, is the non-communicable diseases epidemics and the triple burden of malnutrition (FAO, 2017). According to the WHO (2016) on a worldwide scale “39% of adults aged 18 years and over were overweight in 2014, and 13% were obese”. Furthermore, noncommunicable diseases are the cause of 70% of all deaths on a global scale (WHO, 2017) and their often chronic nature has a high economic cost as well (O’Kane, 2011).

Communicable disease, brought by the modern food system are also a major threat to the Public Health (IPES-Food, 2016). Firstly, the genetic homogenization of livestock have lead to outbreaks of avian and pig flu which have affected humans (IPES-Food, 2016). Secondly, the regular use of antibiotics in conventional livestock breeding has exacerbated the problem of antibiotic-resistant bacteria, which can potentially lead to a catastrophic pandemic (IPES-Food, 2016).

## 1.2. Australian Food System

The setting for this project is the city of Melbourne, which is the capital of the state of Victoria, Australia and the specifics of the FS effects in the area are investigated below.

### 1.2.1. Implications

According to the Melbourne’s Foodprint report (Sheridan et al., 2016) in order to supply food to the population of around 4.6 million (ABS, 2017), over 475L of water are used per capita per day, which is around double the city’s household usage; 16.3 million hectares of land are managed, per year; around 4.1 million tonnes of GHG emissions are emitted from production and a further 2.5 million tonnes from food waste. Furthermore, the cities population is expected to keep growing until 2050, reaching 7-8 million people (Sheridan et al., 2016).

Throughout Australia, an estimated 5.7 million hectares have been or are at risk of being affected by salinity, while the levels of soil acidification and erosion are increasing (Selvey & Care, 2012). Another effect, which may be brought on by climate change, is the increasing frequency of heatwaves over the past decade, with prognosis of around a 15-30% drop in the amount of food produced during the next 40 years (Selvey & Care, 2012). Simultaneously, Australia has been affected by water scarcity, due to low rainfall (ABS, 2007), which is exacerbated by the FS, since “irrigated agriculture” uses 65% of the overall water (Bradbear & Friel, 2011). Another threat to the environment that can be attributed to agriculture is the loss of biodiversity and in Australia “1700 species and ecological communities” are at risk, making many ecosystems vulnerable (Bradbear & Friel, 2011).

As mentioned above, the modern food system has been connected to a number of health, social and economic consequences, that can also be observed in Australia. There is a similar level of overweight (35.3%), as other developed countries, but the rate of obese people is almost double (27.5%) (ABS, 2013). Moreover, diet-related diseases have the highest mortality and morbidity rates accounting for nearly half the health budget in 2004/05 (O’Kane, 2011). Over 898 thousand people have been diagnosed with Diabetes Type II and the prevalence has more than doubled between 1989 and 2008 (AIHW, 2014). Out of all health spending (\$121.4 billion) accounting for 9.4% of total expenditure on all goods and services, the majority was spent on hospitals. Furthermore, hospitals spend the most (11%) on treating Cardiovascular diseases (AIHW, 2014).

Another aspect of the impacts of the industrialized food system is the high rate of suicide amongst farmers and agricultural workers, which is more than double than that of the employed urban residents. This is a global trend that can be attributed to the high volatility of the food production businesses (Kölves et al., 2012).

### **1.2.2. Australian Food System Actors**

The Australian FS has most of the characteristics of other developed countries, with high industrialization and productivity, where the food market is dominated by larger, often multinational business actors (Parfitt et al., 2012).

#### 1.2.2.1. Food market

The food market encompasses food producers, distributors, food processors and retailers, catering, etc. and the ongoing trend had been that of consolidation, where the bigger players limiting the access to the market for smaller ones (McKenzie, 2016) (Spencer & Kneebone, 2012). For example, the most food and beverages (67%) are sold through supermarkets, with two chain retailers (Coles and Woolworths) sharing around 68% of all retail sales (Spencer & Kneebone, 2012).

#### 1.2.2.2. Government

Governments have an important role in the FS, as they can affect change by policies; promotion (environmental, health, food security, safety, export and financial policies), taxation, subsidies, etc. Exporting food has been a priority in shaping government policy in relation to the FS, even though environmental conditions have already affected yields (McKenzie, 2016) (Spencer & Kneebone, 2012). Furthermore, according to McKenzie (2016) there are “bureaucratic silos”, which make it difficult to take a holistic approach towards solving issues within the FS.

#### 1.2.2.3. Consumer

Both McKenzie (2016) and a report from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (Spencer & Kneebone, 2012) uncovered that the Australian consumers are predominantly price and convenience driven, but their dietary preferences have a strong influence on the food supply. Furthermore, McKenzie (2016) cautioned that they lack “knowledge, awareness or interest” of how their food choices affect the current FS, which is aided by the “lack of transparency” and labelling misuse.

### 1.3. Alternative Food Systems

The complex issues of the globalized FS and the search for solutions have caused a marked increase in research and development on all levels of the system. Especially the last decade, a new emerging trend has been the development of “producer–consumer cooperation in food networks”, which have grown either oppositely or with little relation to the current globalized FS (Renting et al., 2012). In



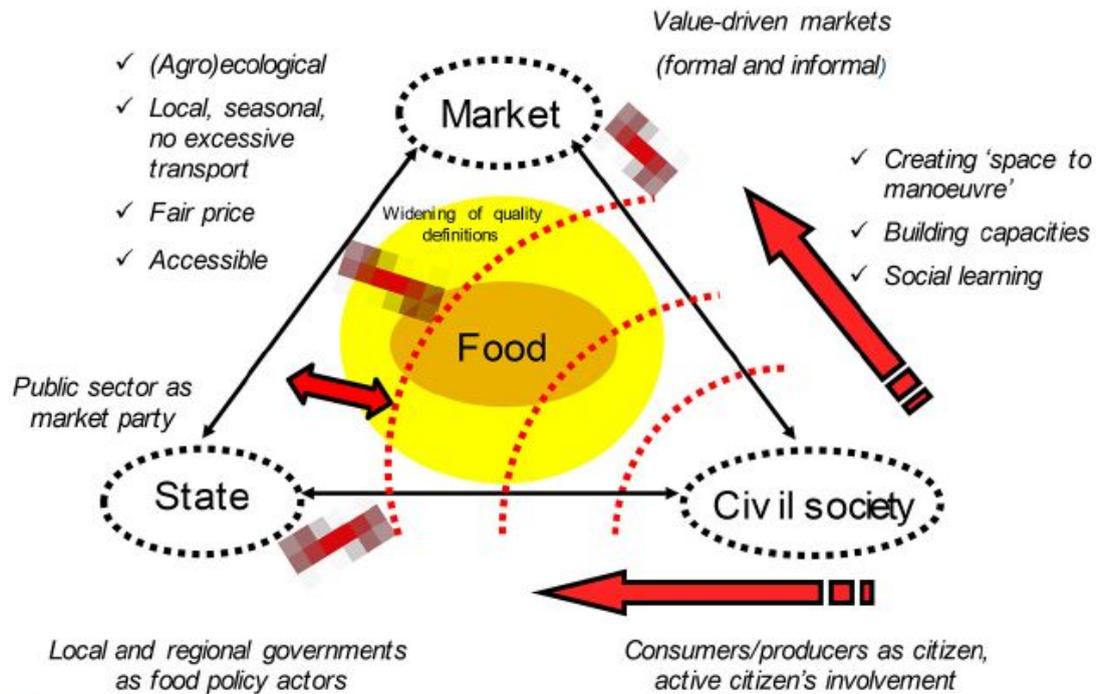


Figure 2. Solutions through citizenship-driven FS (Renting et al., 2012)

In this model, the influence goes from citizen through local and regional governments to state government and to creating value-driven markets. Those systems have some characteristics in common:

- preference to sustainable production methods
- preference to local and seasonal foods
- ensuring fair pay for food producers
- ensuring food security for all citizens

Thus, investing in the building of citizenship-driven FS can help alleviate some of the negative implications of the globalized FS presented above. A relatively new term has been coined to address this development, namely “Food citizenship” (FC).

## 2. Research aim and questions

The globalized food system has serious implications for the future food security and quality of life of the Australian consumer. Food citizenship (FC) is seen as an important driver for change and this paper aims to investigate this trend through qualitative methods and propose some solutions to encourage its development.

Research questions:

1: What aspects of FC are represented by the Melburnian consumer, investigated by use of semi-structured expert interviews on the different levels of the socio-ecological model?

2: How can the Melburnian consumer be influenced to raise their FC?

### 3. State of the Art

#### 3.1. Defining elements of FC

Creating a simplistic, all-encompassing definition of FC is challenging, as it is a combination of complex discourses and researchers tend to use overlapping terms to describe them. While investigating the literature, several expressions were found most common and relevant: “food democracy”, “food sovereignty”, “ecological citizenship”, “consumer citizenship”.

“Food democracy” has been used to advocate against the corporate power over the FS with diminishing opportunity for “consumer participation” and ability to implement change to the system (Renting et al., 2012). “Food sovereignty” has similar parameters, but has been predominantly driven by the food producer perspective and can even be described as “agrarian citizenship” (Renting et al., 2012). Both “ecological citizenship” and “consumer citizenship” have a broader meaning as they encompass all sustainable consumption and are not only limited to food (Evans, 2011) (Johnston, 2007). Moreover, the term “citizen-consumer” highlights the paradoxical combination of consumerism, “rooted in individual self-interest” and citizenship, centered around “collective responsibility” (Johnston, 2007). This collective responsibility is often discussed in relation to democracy, and according to other authors it is not a matter of acting as “a good samaritan” but to actually negate the “asymmetrical” relationships between consumers with very different “ecological footprints”. The definition presented by Wilson (2006) states:

“the ecological citizen will want to ensure that his ecological footprint does not compromise . . . the ability of others in present and future generations to pursue options important to them”. The emphasis here is on obligations, becoming a “citizen

of the world” and actively looking for solution to equalize the ecological impact of their actions.

Another facet of ecological citizenship has been “ethical consumerism”, which harnesses the “private purchasing power” of consumers concerned about the ethical aspects of their food, but might not be sufficient to oppose the powerful business and political actors with their focus on revenue at the expense of the environment (Morgan, 2010).

Throughout the literature one definition of FC has been cited often as:

“the practice of engaging in food-related behaviours (defined narrowly and broadly) that support, rather than threaten, the development of democratic, socially and economically just, and environmentally sustainable food systems” (Wilkins, 2005).

Wilkins (2005) also discusses the barriers limiting the power of people to develop FC. Starting with the FS, as the first barrier, as it does not currently support “sustainable, community-based food“ production and the sheer overload of products can be confusing for the consumers. Secondly, the state agriculture policy can be found at fault for subsidising “over-supply of a narrow range of commodities”. Additionally, Wilkins (2005) gives the example of another failure in policy, by not encouraging the local sourcing of food for public provision in schools. Lastly, the “nutrition, agriculture, and food system professionals” need to put more effort to oppose the “increasing corporate influence”, to be able to evaluate products objectively and present that knowledge to the public with high credibility (Wilkins, 2005).

### 3.2. Research on FC in Australia

The concept of FC and its related terms is relatively new in Australia as well, but there have been conducted a few studies in the subject area.

A study by Kriflik (2006) investigated the actions consumers would take to avoid “perceived food related threats to health and environment” and concluded that they “take citizenship action to benefit both self and others.” Although some were motivated primarily by self-interest, they can still “contribute to the general good” without perceiving it as a “sacrifice” (Kriflik, 2006).

O’Kane (2016) published a qualitative study, using a socio-ecological model to investigate the barriers and opportunities for FC amongst five groups of “food procurers: community gardeners, regular farmers’ market shoppers, CSA members, fresh food market and supermarket shoppers. They participated in focus groups designed around issues related to FC, like: “selecting local, seasonal and organic food, vegetarianism, preserving food and composting, and procuring food from foodways that promote animal welfare, social justice and community development” (O’Kane, 2016). According to O’Kane (2016), FC is connected to an individual’s “commitment to values”, not predominantly centered around economic prosperity, but also the importance of social and environmental factors of well-being (O’Kane, 2016). The results of the study showed that the community gardeners had the highest commitment to FC, followed by the farmers’ market shoppers, then the CSA group (O’Kane, 2016). All those had knowledge and awareness about their food choices impacting the FS and were engaged in activities to improve it (O’Kane, 2016). On the other hand, the fresh food market group had lower interest and awareness about the impact of their actions on the FS even though they preferred to buy their produce from a market (O’Kane, 2016). The group that exhibited the lowest level of FC were the supermarket shoppers, as their complete disconnect from the food producers have “disempowered” them. This is a troubling trend, since as indicated above, the majority of food provisioning is done at supermarkets. O’Kane (2016) concluded that there are a number of opportunities on the “macro-level food environment” to support shoppers towards a higher engagement in FC, either through promotional campaigns, better labeling policies, regulation of the food retail sector, etc.

Due to the relative novelty of the term “food citizenship” and similar concepts, there is a lot to be done in the area of research, both on a global level but also specifically in Australia. The studies found, mostly focused on qualitative exploration of the FC attributes of consumers or discussing the theoretical discourse, but little is known of the opinions of experts in the area of food, who are in the position to work towards developing FC in Australia.

Throughout the research of the literature on FS, especially in regards to FC there were a number of recurring concepts, such as buying organic or growing own food

and the model in Figure 3., is an attempt to put them all in perspective to what was found regarding citizenship and food. The model can not account for all the complexity and overlapping between the terms, but it helps keep focus on what was of most interest in the area of FC and what the interview guides were centered around.

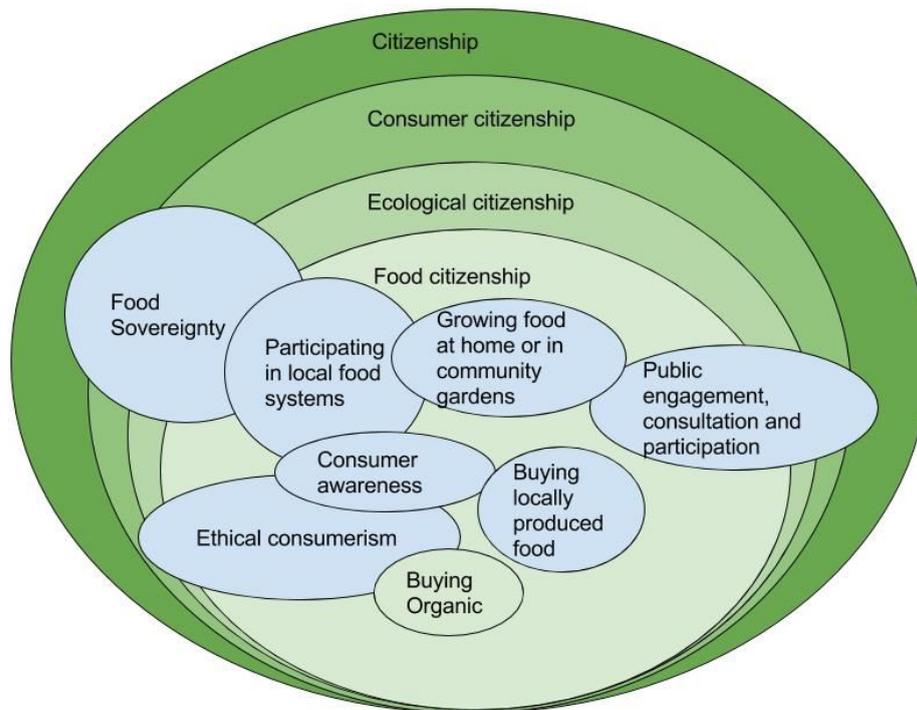


Figure 3. Concepts connected to Food citizenship

## 4. Methods and theoretical framework

### 4.1. Philosophy of science

By data collected through interviewing experts in the area of food, combined with the information from literature, this study can present a broad, initial discussion on the subject matter of FC.

With the use of semi-structured interviews, the researcher attempts to investigate “themes of the lived daily world from the subjects' own perspectives” (Kvale, 2007). Their foundation can be found in phenomenological and hermeneutical philosophy, since they are focused on systematically reflecting on the “experience,

consciousness, meaning, interpretation and human interrelations”, especially by interpreting conversation and texts (Kvale, 2007).

There are specific differences when interviewing experts, in particular regarding gaining access and the power asymmetry (Kvale, 2007). Experts can be viewed as “crystallization points” for knowledge and due to this, they can be interviewed instead of larger groups of participants, allowing to collect high quality data in a shorter time-frame (Bogner et al., 2009). Furthermore, experts can be motivated to participate by a number of factors, including shared professional background with the interviewer, understanding of the relevance of the research project, curiosity, an aspiration to contribute to a development, etc (Bogner et al., 2009). The definition and thus selection process can be complicated, but a recurring theme is that an expert is an individual, who has accumulated knowledge in a specific field, through specialized educational training and/or practical experience (Bogner et al., 2009). Furthermore, the choice of experts is defined by the purpose of the interview, that can be defined in three broad terms: the exploratory expert interview providing orientation; the systematizing expert interview used for methodical information gathering; the theory-generating expert interview aimed at investigating “social interpretative patterns and subjective action orientation criteria” (Bogner et al., 2009). Nevertheless, in any of those types, experts can not be defined as purely a source of objective knowledge and in fact their personalized reflections on the research topic is what is of interest (Bogner et al., 2009). In order to obtain the best data, the expert has to perceive the interviewer as “quasi expert” with pre-existing knowledge of the subject area (Bogner et al., 2009). This is a desirable position for the interviewer, since it is placed between two undesirable ends of the spectrum, on one side being treated paternalistically as a lay person, and on the other as a fellow expert, which brings the implications of competition (Bogner et al., 2009).

#### **4.1.1. Aspects of qualitative interviewing**

There are a number of aspects of qualitative interviewing, which were taken into account when designing this study (Kvale, 2007):

- Life world - qualitative research interviews are a method to investigate the experience of the interviewee's lived everyday world (Kvale, 2007). Since this

study was performed by interviewing experts, the focus was slightly shifted on a meta-discussion of a complex issue, requiring the use of their expertise combined with personal opinion to synthesize new knowledge.

- Meaning - In the context of qualitative interviews, meaning is extracted both from what is said and how it is said, focusing on non-verbal communication (Kvale, 2007). As this project was mostly focused on extracting factual information from experts, there was less emphasis on body language, as the subjects were not expected to have strong emotional reactions to the subject matter.
- Qualitative - In general the qualitative interview seeks to gather knowledge of the subjects' life worlds in their own language, without attempting to quantify their responses (Kvale, 2007). This aspect is lost to an extent, when conducting interviews with experts in this project, as the use of common terminology is unavoidable. During the construction of the semi-structured interview guide it was attempted to balance the use of terminology, so the interviewer can appear competent, but also to avoid it when possible, as to test if the expert will make similar connections between a somewhat open question and a specific phenomena.
- Descriptive - During qualitative interviews, the subjects are prompted to describe their life world in great detail, allowing for diverse aspects instead of pre-determined categories (Kvale, 2007). To comply with this aspect in this study, the experts were allowed to elaborate on their individual perspectives of the subject matter, by starting with open-ended objective questions and encouraged with follow-up questions.
- Specificity - In order to obtain meaningful information about a personal worldview, it is preferable to avoid general questions (Kvale, 2007). Although, in this project, the experts were asked to generalize for the Australian consumer, based on their knowledge, their more personal relation to the subject matter was also questioned through framing questions specific to their activity in the organisations they represented.
- Qualified naïveté - The qualitative interviewer has to maintain an openness, by avoiding pre-formulated questions, in order to be ready to receive new and

unexpected knowledge around the chosen topics (Kvale, 2007). Once again, in this project, the aspect has to be balanced with the need to be knowledgeable and prepared, but also not to allow pre-existing assumptions to taint the collected data.

- Focused - As the term semi-structured interviews implies, the researcher prepares to investigate specific themes, by leading to them with open questions, being careful not to exhibit any stance towards those themes (Kvale, 2007). For this project, the prepared questions were stated with as little detail as possible and additional explanation was provided only if the interviewee exhibited difficulty answering. Also new questions were added or the order was switched around, as to allow the interview to “flow”, as closely as possible to a natural conversation.
- Ambiguity - Qualitative interviews are largely open to different interpretations and the interviewer has the difficult task to ascertain if the ambiguous answer is not due to miscommunication, or because of inconsistencies in the subject's' world view (Kvale, 2007). Since the topic of FC is relatively new and was unfamiliar to all the interviewees in this study, it was expected that questions exploring the subject directly would gain ambiguous answers. This is why indirect questions were prepared, to investigate different known aspects of FC, as to “paint” a broader picture of the topic.
- Change - Qualitative interviewing allows for change in the interviewee's description of a theme, as the interview can “shine new light” on previous knowledge or spark reflection (Kvale, 2007). During this study, this aspect was expected even when preparing the semi-structured interview guide, as the topic was unfamiliar to the subjects, therefore changes of opinion and conflicting statements were highly possible during the interview process.
- Sensitivity - In qualitative interviewing the sensitivity and topic knowledge of the interviewer has to be taken into account, as it influences the obtained responses. There is a need to balance out the paradox of not biasing one's research with assumptions, but also being prepared and capable in the subject area (Kvale, 2007). As this study focused on expert interviews, the interviewer had to be better prepared, as an expert in the topic of FC, in order

to gain the respect of the subjects, but still leaving some space for some qualified naïveté.

- Interpersonal situation - An important aspect that might limit the reproducibility of the results is that the interviewer's interaction and the context influences the responses of the subjects (Kvale, 2007). In this project, this was accounted for by keeping the communication with the subjects in a polite, but not too personable language and being very flexible in adapting to their requirements for space and time for the interview, thus showing respect for their status as experts.
- Positive experience - A good qualitative interviewer is aware that due to the personal nature of the interview, it can be stressful for the subjects, and therefore aims at creating a positive experience (Kvale, 2007). In the case of this study, a possible problem was that the subjects might feel their expert status was threatened by the unfamiliar topic or that they were held responsible for their nation's shortcomings by the researcher who is not Australian but an outsider. Therefore, language was monitored as to show that the researcher is not passing judgement, by asking questions through an exploratory lense and backed up by research.

#### **4.1.2. Socio-ecological framework**

The use of the socio-ecological framework allows examination of the complexity of the FC discourse through different environmental levels that influence people when making food choices. There are different interpretations of this model, but for this project the model used by O'Kane (2016) has been chosen, since it was already appropriated for the research of FC in Australia (See Fig. 4). The levels of the model are individual, social, physical and macro-level environments and those were used in order to choose relevant organisation for interviews. Firstly, the individual level is characterized by attitudes, knowledge, values, skills, behaviours and demographic factors like income, education, age and gender. Those factors can be influenced by behavioral capability, motivations, self-efficacy and outcome expectations. O'Kane's study (2016) indicates that FC is not uniformly high amongst all consumers, whereas

particular groups, such as "women, older people and those from larger households or the better educated" are the most committed to making ethical food choices. There seems to be a mismatch between people's awareness and attitudes and their actual behaviour, where they seem to be highly influenced by price and convenience. The next layer impacting people's choices is their social environment, where family, friends and peers, exert influence through support, role-modelling and social norms. Following is the third level, consisting of the settings or the physical environment, where the level of FC is influenced by work environment, the neighbourhood where they live and the availability and access to food outlets, varying from supermarkets to restaurants. Lastly, the macro-level environment can exert power over people's decision-making, regarding FC, through government policies, social norms and food system structure. O'Kane's study (2016) indicates that the current food system, which is supported by governmental policies, may be inhibiting the development of FC, since the access and availability of affordable, healthy and sustainably-produced food is limited.

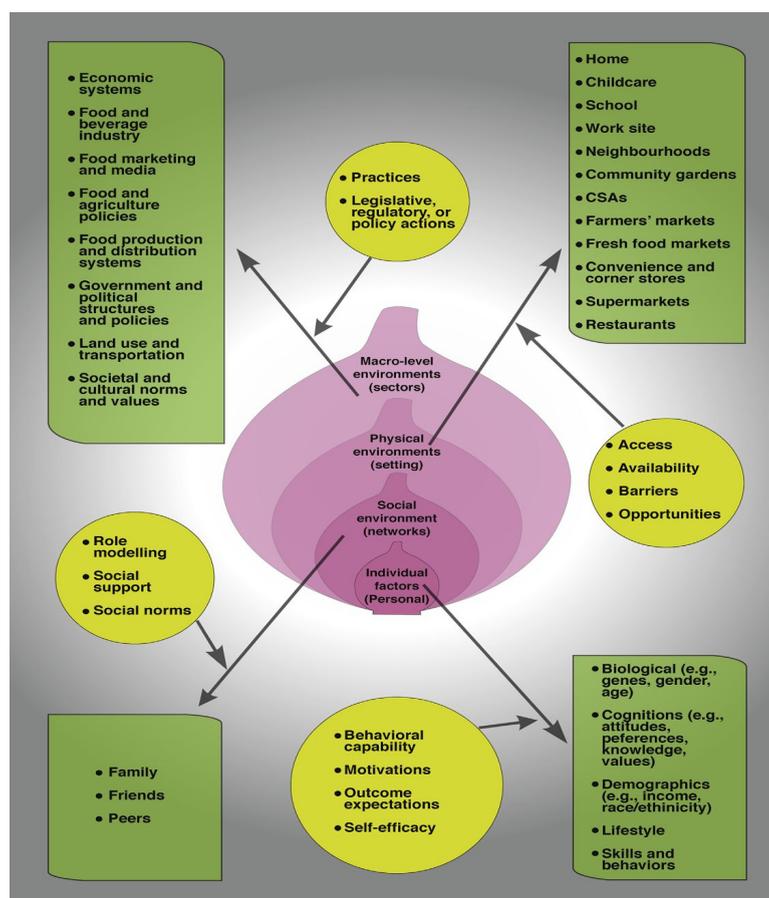


Figure 4. Socio-ecological framework around Food citizenship (O'Kane, 2016)

In order to investigate the problem area of FC, relevant organisations on each level were identified, through online search and investigation of the literature, and then contacted with a brief project description and a request for interview.

## 4.2. Qualitative Semi-structured interviews

### 4.2.1. Steps of qualitative interview design

According to Kvale (2007), there are several steps to designing a qualitative interview study:

1. Thematizing is to be done before the interviews and centers on framing the purpose of the study, by gathering knowledge on the chosen topic and making choices on interview and analysis methods. Extensive research has been done on the subject area for this project, to aid the choice of interview subjects, the formulation of themes and questions and methods of inquiry. Due to the use of the ecological model and expert subjects, interview with hypotheses testing was chosen, as it aims at comparing between groups and is more structured and standardized.
2. Designing is the next step that also has to be accomplished before embarking on the interviews and take into account all other stages of the process, including the ethical considerations. At this step of the project, critical decisions were made with account to the time and practical constraints, still allowing to generate sufficient quality thesis. Due to the lack of established network and time limitation, methods requiring a substantial number of participants were excluded, such as surveys or focus groups. To maximize the quality of the data gathered in a small number of interviews, experts in the topic area were chosen. The experts, who agreed to participate were informed on the nature of the study, were asked for consent to record the conversations and to confirm their statements by being presented with the final transcripts. Moreover, it was taken into account that with the nature of their positions, the subjects will have limited time to participate, so the interviews had to be prepared to extract good quality data within 1 hour.

3. Interviewing is then conducted, by the use of a semi-structured guide with considerations of the interpersonal nature of the interview. When preparing the interview guide, the researcher must be aware that investigating the research question through a number of questions can provide a more nuanced picture. This was especially addressed in this study, since a direct question about FC was not expected to yield comprehensive results, therefore a number of questions were designed to focus on different known aspects of the topic. Furthermore, there was use of both direct and indirect questions, as to limit possible confrontation or influencing by the interviewer. Although, during the interviews it was attempted to keep to the pre-determined structure, where the subjects were brought back to topic by structuring questions, there was also an allowance for veering off the prepared guide, through follow-up and probing questions when the new information was deemed relevant. Even though, it was expected that the chosen experts have experience in being interviewed, thus it was not expected that they will be particularly stressed, it was taken care that, even that there were time constraints, the interviews were taken with no sense of urgency, whereas silence was allowed to give time for reflections and with the intention to keep the tone of voice slow, even and articulated.
4. Transcribing is the phase where the collected data is prepared for analysis, by reformulating speech to text. For the current study, the interviews were recorded through Android phone apps (Voice Recorder and Call recorder) and transcribed with the aid of a free online solution (<http://otranscribe.com/>). Since the purpose of the interviews was mainly to obtain insider knowledge on the Australian context around FC, the verbatim oral style transcription was deemed inappropriate, as the linguistic properties of the data are not relevant. Instead it was opted for written style, where intonation, emotional expression, fillers (hmm, yeah, etc.), pauses and similar were omitted, as they were not considered relevant to the intended findings. Furthermore, transcripts were kept in the interviewee's language, but words and sentences were omitted where the researcher found repetition or to synthesize the meaning in a shorter statement. Transcripts were reviewed several times before send for

confirmation to the interviewees', to give them the opportunity to comment or clarify their answers. The transcripts can be found in Appendix I.

5. Analyzing, according to Green and colleagues (2007), a qualitative data analysis should consist of four steps: immersion in the data, coding, creating categories, and the identification of themes. The immersion process starts with the interviews, as the interviewer will retain some information during the conversation and then it is further developed by transcribing, listening and re-reading, in order to be able to generate ideas (Green et al., 2007). Following is the coding process, where the researcher starts to uncover meaning by grouping text under codes, which are more than just labels as they take into account the context of the interview (Green et al., 2007). Furthermore, these codes are linked into categories, where they share similarities and separate categories are created for contradicting data (Green et al., 2007). For a descriptive study, there is no need to go further, but in order to generate themes, which can be used to interpret the meaning of the categories, the data must be examined through the lense of relevant theory (Green et al., 2007). If this step is successful, the study results are more generalizable for different populations, thus producing better evidence (Green et al., 2007). These steps were followed in this study, starting from the designing phase, as themes were already applied to constructing the interview guides, with the use of the ecological model. Some of the categories and codes were also prepared in advance, with the use of information from literature, while the majority was added during and after the interviews. Data was analysed with use of Google Docs and Google sheets.
6. Verifying is an important step of the scientific process, where the validity, reliability and generalizability of the results is established (Kvale, 2007). Those aspects differ from their counterparts in quantitative design and are largely defined by the purpose of the investigation. In this study, validation was addressed, by doing extensive review of the literature and enquiring about the findings during the interviews and vice versa, using information gathered during the enquiry to investigate the literature further. Due to the study design and the small sample size, statistical generalization is not

possible for this study, but it is attempted to give analytical generalization, by presenting the transferability of the findings done through the expert interviews, in comparison with the published work of other experts in the area.

7. Reporting is the stage where the results of the interviews are presented in a readable form, taking into account the ethical consideration of the project (Kvale, 2007). Quotes from the interviews are put into the context by the researchers, ideally using the language of the participants, but minimizing verbatim style, which is difficult to read (Kvale, 2007). Those guidelines have been followed in this study, whereas quotes have been adapted to create “readable” flow, but kept true to the vocabulary of the experts.

#### **4.2.2. Ethical considerations**

According to Kvale (2007) the ethical implications should be reflected on each step of the qualitative interview study design.

First, during the thematizing step, the intended result of the study should be put into perspective, by aiming at contributing positively towards the problematic area under study (Kvale, 2007). One of the main aims of this project is to provide a “stepping stone” to finding policy solutions for raising FC in the Australian consumer.

During the design stage, the focus is on attaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality and reflecting on the implications of the participants (Kvale, 2007). For this project, since the purpose is not into investigating personal life experiences and the expert status of the subjects was of utmost importance, anonymity was deemed undesirable and unnecessary. Clear consent was acquired from all of the experts, apart from one, where there were some doubts, and therefore the names of the person and organisation have been changed.

Furthermore, the the burden of stress during the interview, should be taken into account (Kvale, 2007). Although, in this project, it was expected that the participants are to a large extent comfortable with being interviewed, they might feel anxious to converse on an area that is new to them. This was addressed by providing definitions in the preliminary email correspondence and during the interviews.

In the transcription phase, confidentiality needs to be addressed, as well as keeping true to the participants speech and meaning (Kvale, 2007). As mentioned above, verbatim style transcription was deemed unnecessary for this study, but possible deviations from the experts meaning was minimized by having them to review the transcripts.

According to Kvale (2007), in the analysis stage, the ethical consideration is given to how deeply the analysis is conducted and if the participants are allowed to confirm the results. As this study was not investigating a sensitive, private topic and the experts have limited time to spare, it was decided not to present them with the initial results.

The verification step is characterized by the moral obligation of the interviewer to substantiate the acquired information, as objectively as possible, while exerting just enough pressure on the participants (Kvale, 2007).

In the final stage of reporting, the ethical considerations under question are again about confidentiality and the consequences for the participants (Kvale, 2007). Since the experts of this study are a part of organisations, attention was given to the fact on how their statements might affect their standing in those, often as employees.

#### **4.2.3. The role of the interviewer**

In qualitative interviewing, there is a high awareness of the impact that the interviewer has on the obtained data. It is a sometimes paradoxical balance between aiming to gather, analyse and present the results, as objectively as possible, and the admittance that it is not possible to achieve a high objectivity, in what is in its essence, a human interaction. Therefore, the quality of the conducted interview study, rests highly on the preparation and skill of the researcher, to remain impartial and to apply the right techniques (Kvale, 2007).

First and foremost, the interviewer has to be exceedingly knowledgeable about the researched topic, whilst remaining humble (Kvale, 2007). This was especially important aspect in this study, where consideration was given of gaining the respect of the interviewed experts, by being prepared on the topic, whilst avoiding to present as much more knowledgeable.

Other crucial skills for the interviewer are about being clear, gentle and sensitive during the interviews, by not putting pressure on the subjects (Kvale, 2007). During the interviews conducted for this project, there was taken great care to state the questions as clear as possible, listen patiently to the answers without interruption and actively attempt to limit the stress of the situation.

Furthermore, there is another equilibrium to be achieved, between steering the conversation to the research topic and at the same time remaining open to pursuing new aspects and information (Kvale, 2007). Since the participants in this study, were experts in the area of food, embedded in organizations that act on different levels of the system, it was observed that they might tend to discuss the broad subject from a narrower point of view. Although this was a desired effect, as the purpose was to gain knowledge from different angles, at times it was necessary to steer the interview towards the bigger picture.

In order to achieve a high quality interview, the researcher has to be able to remain alert and not only remember what the subject has said throughout the process, but also connect what has been said and then interpret it, by summarizing and seeking confirmation by the subject (Kvale, 2007). This was particularly paramount in this project, as the subject matter of FC is highly complex and abstract and none of the subjects were familiar with the use of the term.

#### **4.2.4. Interview setting and procedure details**

With the use of the socio-ecological model and the comprehensive online research of the Australian context regarding FC, four relevant organisations were identified on each level, then contacted through the relevant email address, presenting the project and researcher and requesting an interview. All the experts contacted were interested in participating, but setting up the actual interview took from a few weeks to a month. The researcher was prepared by surveying the literature and constructing semi-structured interview guides. Additionally, the person interviewed plus the organisation they were a part of was researched, thus aiding the structure of the introductory questions to help the subjects be more comfortable with keeping to their “comfort zone” initially and to build the connection between their field of expertise and the project’s topic. To prepare the experts, they were given a brief

project description and a definition of FC. After the experts have delivered their “talk tracks” (Kvale, 2007), which are possibly pre-rehearsed through previous interviews, they were lead into the subject matter, with which they were less familiar and were provoked to answer questions that required thinking, with the aim of generating new knowledge. Each interview guide contained a block of questions that was asked in all interviews, but also questions that were specifically tailored for the different individuals and their sphere of expertise.

The first interview was arranged through contacting the email supplied at the City of Melbourne Food Policy web page, which was in turn responded by Greg Jacobs, a Team Leader Health Projects of the Health and Wellbeing Branch, thus meeting the criteria for macro level of the ecological model. The interview was conducted in a meeting room in the City Council House 2. The interview proceeded in the intended time frame and without any disturbances. Greg Jacobs seemed at ease with being interviewed and was curious about the subject. He later on provided access to the 4 year report on the progress to the policy and confirmed on the interview transcription.

The next interview was with one of the organisers of the community gardening organisation, which was considered a good fit for investigating FC on a societal level, as to examine how it can be influenced by the connections between people. Although an organisation like this fits into the settings level of the model as well, due to the smaller scale it was preferred to focus on investigating the social factors, such as role models, social support and norms. Due to uncertainty with the consent to have the transcript published, the name of the organisation and the expert have been changed to protect their anonymity. Jane has a economics educational background and years of experience in environmental and social advocacy and is one of the founding members of the organisation “Neighbourhood Growers”. The interview was held at one of their garden sites, while she worked on it, which might have lead to a certain level of distraction and hence compromising the quality. Nevertheless, she was knowledgable about the community gardens aspect and the implications of the modern food system.

Further, for the interview on a settings level, a non-for-profit organisation called CERES (Centre for Education and Research in Environmental Strategies), which has a 4.5 hectares park in Melbourne with “green technology demonstrations and a number of social enterprises including a market, grocery, café, community kitchen, organic online supermarket and a permaculture bushfood nursery” (CERES website). Their activity was deemed relevant as they encompass a lot of the elements of that level and reach a large group of people. The interview was conducted with Melissa Lawson, who has been a part of CERES for 15 years and is the Farm and Food Group Manager at CERES, with a background in business management and managing food-based social enterprises. The conversation took place in the employee kitchen area, close to lunchtime, so there were a number of interruptions. Nevertheless, Melissa Lawson was very knowledgeable in the area of food sustainability and education and imparted her knowledge readily.

The last interview was held to investigate the FC problem on an individual level. Since the study constraints did not allow for interviewing a number of different consumers, a consumer advocacy group was chosen, to represent the consumers’ characteristics and needs on a larger scale. Contact was made with Katinka Day, who is a Senior Food Policy and Campaigns Advisor at CHOICE. Since she was based in Sydney, the interview was conducted by telephone. Due to some scheduling misunderstandings, the interview started with some confusion, but it was quickly adjusted. Katinka Day was very competent about the issues met by consumers in relation to FC and expressed vivid interest in the subject.

## 5. Results and Analysis

The purpose of this project has been to investigate and propose solutions to the problem area of FC in Australia and in particular the city of Melbourne, Victoria, through information collected by reviewing the literature and expert interviews. The decision to investigate the context on all layers of the Ecological model was taken from the project start and was implemented throughout all phases.

The process of analyzing was started by applying predetermined codes and identifying new ones in the interview transcripts in Google Docs. Those were then grouped in categories and themes created according to the Ecological model and through what was known of the problem area. To help create an overview the codes were then transformed into a table format in Google Sheets. Color coding was implemented to further aid the visual differentiation between groups. Moreover, a visual representation of the Socio-ecological model created for this specific project is presented by the figure below.

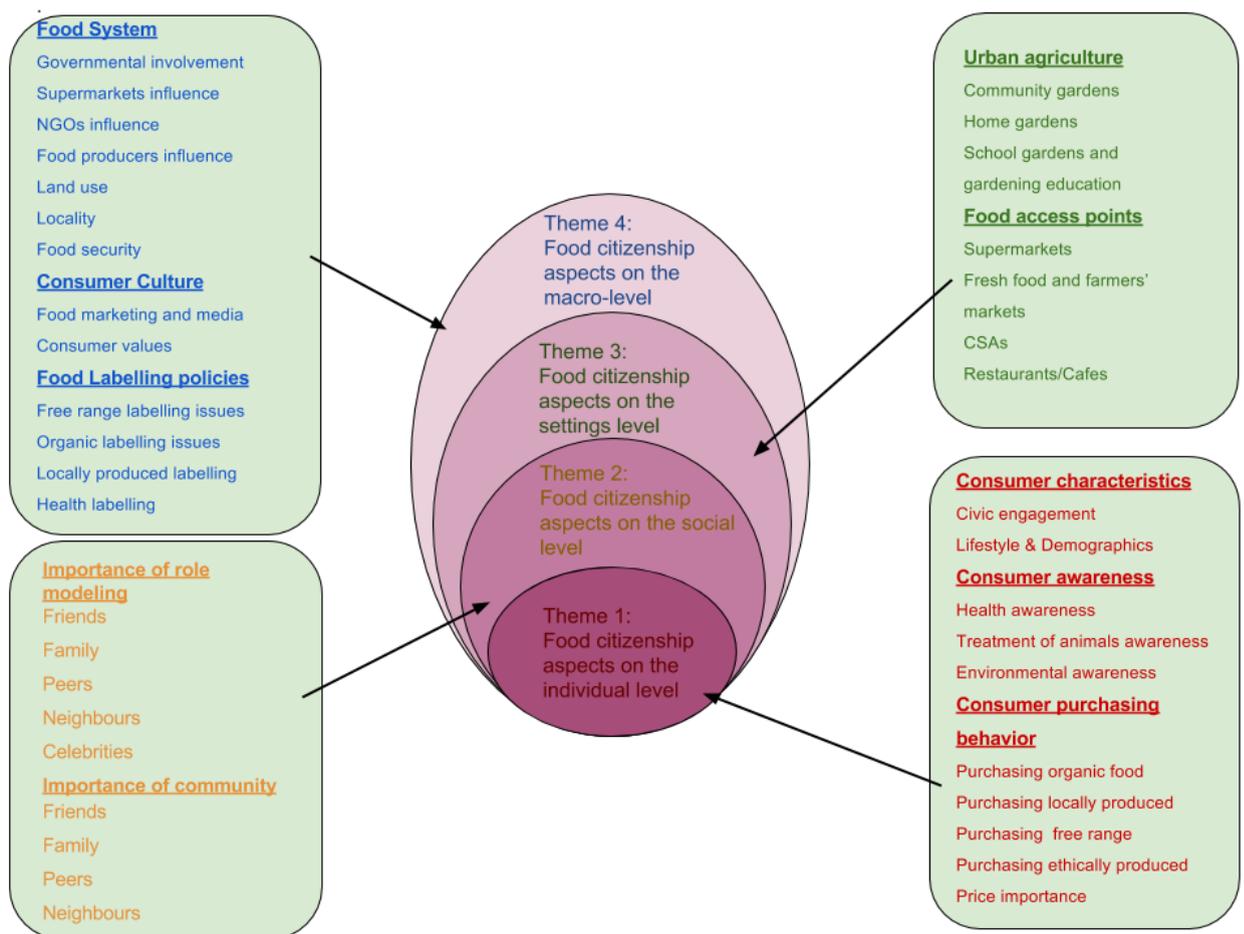


Figure 5. The transformed socio-ecological framework

Although experts were recruited on account of their belonging to an organisation, operating primarily on one of those levels, they were asked questions relating to all themes. This was meant to create a comprehensive representation of the area and to aid with the proposal of solutions to raise FC on all levels, from individual, social,

settings and macro-level. The codes were designed according to the factors affecting FC on each level and the categories were created by grouping those factors, with the guidance of the Socio-ecological model. The codes were designed following the outline of this project:

- issues within the current FS
- awareness of these issues amongst consumers
- possible actions that can be taken by consumers to mitigate those issues (FC)
- possible actions by actors affecting consumers' awareness and ability to take action

## 5.1. Theme 1: FC aspects on the Individual level

On the first theme, the individual factors affecting FC were investigated and grouped in the categories consumer characteristics, awareness and purchasing behaviour (See Fig. 5):

### 5.1.1. Consumer characteristics category

#### 5.1.1.1. Civic engagement

Civic engagement is “how an active citizen participates in the life of a community in order to improve conditions for others or to help shape the community’s future” (Adler & Goggin, 2005) and is seen as the direct expression of FC, where people take actions in accordance to the values of sustainably producing and distributing food within their community.

Greg Jacobs from the city of Melbourne, stated that “if people are asking for change then government and business will respond”. He gave an example of how this has already happened with the purchase of free range eggs, which “has become the norm in the last 5-10 years” and has made it “more difficult to find caged than free range” eggs. According to Greg Jacobs, this is due to “consumers demand, because of their concern of the treatment of animals”. He expressed the belief that “if people show the same concern for other facets of the food system we know that things will change” and the “feedback” they got is that “people want to make these changes, that they want to be more connected to food”.

Katinka Day from the consumer organisation CHOICE gave another example, where people affected change through civic engagement, allowing them to make better informed purchasing decisions. When CHOICE started a campaign to improve “country of origin” labels, there were “26000 people signing the campaign and as a result you can already see the new labels”. Katinka Day stressed the importance of having “systems in place to harness the individuals who do want to create change”, because “projects involving citizenship are an opt-in system, so you are getting the more privileged individuals, who are already very interested in those aspects of the food system, involved”.

Melissa Lawson told the story of how CERES was founded and driven by civic engagement over the years to this day. The project was started by “12 individuals who were passionate about the environment and the local community and making a program to help people get employment” and in the early years was continued by “150 volunteers driven by the passion to make a difference”. Even though nowadays CERES has paid employees, the spirit of civic engagement through volunteering remains with “upwards of 40 volunteers a week and it changes depending on the season or if we have a festival or event”. Another important way to engage in the food system, according to Melissa Lawson, is by food shopping, as consumers “vote with their shopping dollar”. This has lead supermarkets to stock “more organic things and have dressed up their stuff to look like farmers” and governments to “talk about food strategy and food security”.

According to Jane from the “Neighbourhood Growers”, the Australian consumer is not “very knowledgeable in general in political things” , since “and there is no awareness that they can change things” and they “don't have that history of rioting and are too trusting of the government”.

#### 5.1.1.2. Lifestyle and Demographics

Melissa Lawson described the volunteers at CERES, who can be considered to have high FC attributes, due to their interest in food and civic engagement, as:

“really varied, we have retired or skilled people, helping with particular projects or technology, or people that are out of the work-force and wanting to do something productive. We have all ages and backgrounds. Some people are travelling and

passing through so they volunteer only for 3 months, other people have been volunteering for many years. It is a very diverse group". She pointed out that although she could describe the typical CERES customer as "35 years old, there are a lot of families and they want their kids to engage with the natural environment", they are still a diverse group with different motivations, like:

"some are gardeners, or people who want to buy good quality organic food, but then we have other customers like the students who come to the workshops and courses. We have over 60000 school kids visiting per year. We have people who want to come and sit in a nice environment, or at the restaurant. Some people love our festivals. We have corporate groups that visit. We reach a lot of people in different ways"

This could be interpreted as a positive sign that the values of FC could be of interest to diverse populations and just one organisation can engage them to affect greater change.

### **5.1.2. Consumer awareness category**

Consumer awareness about sustainability issues is an important factor for the development of FC. Four codes have been discovered to build this category; health, treatment of animals, environmental issues and locality awareness (See Fig. 5).

#### **5.1.2.1. Health awareness**

Greg Jacobs declared that "the events branch at Moomba has informed us about the results from their surveys about people's experience and some of the questions they ask is about the food and the feedback they received was about the lack of healthy food offered there". This indicates that people are aware and ready to request healthier food choices.

Katinka Day from CHOICE raised the issue of the "Health Star Rating" label, which is located on the front of the pack expressing the nutritional value of packaged food with a rating from ½ a star to 5 stars. She declared that "35% people are buying products with higher stars", which can indicate interest in investing in one's health. Further, she states that this is necessary because health and health awareness are heavily impacted by the food business marketing. According to her, a possible

countermeasure is to raise awareness of the food system, which will in turn bring awareness around the “health aspects of the products and greater desire to see food as a way of feeding your body with nutrients”.

#### 5.1.2.2. Treatment of animals awareness

This aspect was raised by two of the experts during the interviews, particularly with the focus on free range production. Katinka Day from CHOICE indicated that 45% of consumers want to buy free range eggs “to support animal welfare”. Greg Jacobs confirmed that the city council has focused more on the issues around free range meat and eggs, due to the “consumers demand, because of their concern of the treatment of animals”. This is a good example of how consumer awareness can be connected to action with which the whole food system can be influenced, thus exercising their FC.

#### 5.1.2.3. Environmental issues awareness

The consumer environmental awareness about the implication of the food system was investigated by either a direct question or indirectly when asking why the home-gardeners did not rank environmental impact in the top 5 benefits for growing their own food. According to Greg Jacobs that might be because people were not aware that even “growing on such a small scale” can have positive implications for the environment.

Katinka Day responded that it is important not to be “ignorant to the problems. The more they are aware of the issues in the environments it gives them more stimulus to take action and be more involved. It is really important to be aware, but it is still quite a niche group of consumers that are”. She proposed that consumers have a high level of awareness about the damage of palm oil production, because there, has been a lot of promotion done around that issue.

Furthermore, Melissa Lawson stated that “for some people gardening is enjoyment and they haven't thought about the environmental impact as a plus”, still the opposite can be true as well since the people who visit CERES have higher awareness and might garden primarily to make a difference. She continued that gardening can be a very useful tool to raise awareness, because then “you have to think about your

inputs, like water, composting, natural pesticides”, thus necessitating acquiring more knowledge.

### **5.1.3. Purchasing behavior category**

As discussed above, ethical consumption can be seen as an integral element of FC, especially since this is the most common everyday activity. Focusing on organic, locally-produced, free range and ethically produced food, as those were the most common through the literature and transcripts.

Melissa Lawson gave the example of CERES “For a lot of people it is about convenience as we are very busy as a society, and I think that is why our online enterprise has worked because we have tapped into something that people need.”

All four experts related that consumers are increasingly interested in buying locally produced, which has lead to supermarkets, food- producers and government to respond, by increasing supply and improving labeling.

Both Greg Jacobs and Katinka Day spoke about the developments of free range eggs labeling as a trend driven by “consumer demand”, making it an example of FC in action.

The subject of ethically produced foods was discussed only by few of the experts, so it might be another topic that needs more attention. For example, Melissa Lawson mentioned “Fairtrade” and then talked about their enterprise “Fair food”, which is a home delivery for organic local, seasonal, groceries, where the producers are paid fair price. Greg Jacobs talked about issues with payments for agricultural workers in Australia and the concept of “Fair food”, which can be described as “sustainable food”.

According to Greg Jacobs, price is a strong deterrent for people, especially when buying organic, because supermarkets have been driving prices down and “it is difficult to adjust to paying the real fair price of food”.

Katinka Day agreed that price is important, but she believed it is more about “value for money” and that people want to buy ethically.

For Melissa Lawson, it was a matter of “the price is right”, consumers could make a more sustainable choice, but it is still not a main priority for the majority.

Also Jane from the “Neighbourhood Growers” confirmed that if organic was “cheaper people will buy it more. People don’t want it hard enough.”

These expert accounts indicate that at the current level of prices, they can act as a barrier to ethical consumption, especially for purchasing organic.

## 5.2. Theme 2: FC aspects on the social level

The second theme was constructed around the next layer of the Socio-ecological model, namely the social environment that influences individual behavior. Two categories were created here, one for the importance of role models and the other for community influence (See Fig. 5).

### 5.2.1. Importance of role modeling category

The positive or negative influence on behavior by peers or media has been extensively studied, and it can be said that they provide a model for “observational learning by increasing self-efficacy and behavioral capability” and aiding behavioural change by expectations management (Ranjit et al., 2015).

According to Katinka Day, “celebrity diet gurus” can have better access to a larger audience, hence they are competing with the government in promoting health advice, even though they may lack the level of evidence that is behind the ADNR.

When Melissa Lawson expands on how CERES can be seen as a role model to other organisations and individuals, she states that the “model that teaches and reaches and inspires is something that you can replicate elsewhere”. Also she believes that their strength is in motivating people through “subtle” methods, by providing practical demonstration and thus motivating people. This can be especially effective when educating children, who in turn “can go home and influence their families”. She continues that this is not limited only to visitors of CERES, but also when people grow food at home, because through sharing excess produce or seedlings you can spark interest in family and friends, especially in children. She also mentions that even though there is a strong influence from American culture through “movies, tv and food”, television is also a medium to witness the actions of “Jamie Olivers of the world”.

The “Neighbourhood Growers” can be seen as an organisation that actively implements role-modeling, as they not only give a practical demonstration of the benefits of gardening in community, but also have developed a “starter pack” explaining the process of creating such an organisation. When asked if the participants are mostly recruited from a private network, as friends and family, or through social network, Jane indicated that she had a sibling join in and apart from that, most people are inspired to join at events, where she does political speaking. This comes to show the power of one individual or small organisation to inspire people to take action.

### **5.2.2. Importance of community category**

The sense of belonging to a community is a basic human need and an integral part of the concept of FC. The two experts, who spoke the most about this category, were the representatives of the two organisations focused on community gardening. According to Melissa Lawson, CERES was started through the passion of individuals to support their local community and this desire to fulfil “community needs” has continued to shape the organisation over the years. She continued by saying that CERES grants people the time and space to reflect about their impact on the world and reconnect to the communal feeling “either through volunteering, workshops or community programs”. She discussed how this was different in the past with “her grandmother's generation....who raised children together and shared things”, but she hopes that people are returning to this way of life, with the help of CERES.

Jane enthused about the community spirit in the “Neighbourhood Growers”, where in a “non-hierarchical way” they would garden together, then harvest and prepare dinner to share amongst themselves and with their families, while enjoying a “lovely” and “utopian” experience.

### **5.3. Theme 3: FC aspects on the settings level**

The next theme focused on the settings encompassing the consumer, by categories of urban agriculture and food access points (see Fig. 5).

### **5.3.1. Urban agriculture category**

Urban agriculture encompasses food production in urban areas as opposed to rural and can range “from subsistence living to commercial enterprises” (Pearson & Hodgkin, 2010). When browsing through the literature, some form of urban agriculture is often connected to the term of FC. This was also one of the most discussed topics with all four of the interviewed experts, who reflected on different aspects of it, even unprompted, signifying the high relevance of this connection.

#### **5.3.1.1. Community gardens**

On policy level, Greg Jacobs explained that available areas for gardening in Central Melbourne is quite limited, thus they have created innovative ways to encourage urban agriculture. They have partnered with the engineering department to develop solutions for community gardens and “street gardens on lane ways, medium strips”. More specific statements about community gardening were made by Jane as a representative of the “Neighbourhood Growers”. She reflected upon the practical difficulties of maintaining a garden, as it requires “quite a bit of knowledge and time and a lot of dedication”. While before she believed that “everybody should grow their own food”, now this belief has changed because even though “everybody can grow their herbs and grains, but only about 1 in 5 can be a farmer even if it is in backyards”. When prompted she agreed that gardening as a part of community garden projects makes the most sense, as it diminishes the stress and makes the experience “fun” even for her, as she doesn’t enjoy gardening. She also discussed some of the benefits of gardening as improving the eating habits, exercise and being outdoors.

#### **5.3.1.2. Home gardens**

The most common form of urban agriculture is still done at home, either front- or backyards, balconies or indoors, etc. Greg Jacobs confirmed that 52% of households in Melbourne grow their own food and he made guesses about their motivations as wanting a “connection with the environment and making the difference, or it is a food security issue, or healthy eating”. Melissa Lawson agreed that this number is

“exciting” as it can create a ripple effect, where people inspire their peers and improve their health. She continued that it comes with some difficulties as it is a learning process and “some things are out of your control as a gardener, like the weather”, but “If we are all urban farmers, how wonderful would that be”.

#### 5.3.1.3. School gardens and gardening education

As most of the experts agreed, education is an integral part of practicing successful urban agriculture. That can be started already in childhood, either through school gardens or school trips. Both Katinka Day and Melissa Lawson talked about the Stephanie Alexander School Garden Program.

According to Katinka Day the program has been successful at “engaging people in the food system” by involving “kids in growing and cooking produce at school” and although voluntary, it might “play a very valuable role to help Australia to build its own food culture”.

Melissa Lawson continued the topic with stating that apart from “Stephanie Alexander School Garden Program, a lot of schools have their own little kitchen gardens”. In her opinion, “the schools see the importance of it”, maybe due to funding issues, they need the support of the government to put a focus on gardening education.

### **5.3.2. Food access points category**

Where people come into contact with their food has a powerful impact on their food choices and what is available to them, including both access and convenience.

#### 5.3.2.1. Supermarkets

Supermarkets are the most common place for food provisioning in Australia, giving them an important role in interacting with the Australian consumer.

Greg Jacobs related that supermarkets can be sensitive to consumer demand and are currently “pitching themselves as sourcing Australian local food”, indicating that this is an important value for the consumers.

While Katinka Day confirmed that the majority still buy from “the major supermarkets”, there is a “growing movement of people that are turning their backs on supermarkets”, choosing alternative outlets due to higher “trust”.

Melissa Lawson expressed the opinion that a shopping experience at a supermarket is a “disconnect”, from the people working there, the food producers and what is seasonally available. She also noticed that the supermarkets around CERES might have a better selection of organic products, compared to other areas, so the population there might have higher demands for it.

#### 5.3.2.2. Fresh food and farmers markets and restaurants/cafes

Katinka Day and Melissa Lawson mentioned the growing trend to visit markets and come directly into contact with the producer, where even if the products are not certified organic, they might still be “sustainably produced”.

Both Grel Jacobs and Melissa Lawson described Melbourne as having a “café culture”, with a large diversity of outlets which can also have a positive influence, through offering “Fairtrade coffee, or free range eggs”.

### 5.4. Theme 4: FC aspects on the macro-level

The outermost layer was centered on the theme of factors affecting FC on the macro-level such as FS, consumer culture and food labelling policies (see Fig. 5).

#### 5.4.1. Food System (FS) category

All the experts contributed to the discussion around food systems, even without being prompted, indicating the importance of this category of the FC problem area. There was a consensus amongst them, that there is a need for a major change in the FS in order to have a sustainable development.

Greg Jacobs emphasized that the industrialized FS “needs to change as there are many consequences of how the food is produced, whether they are environmental, social or health-related”, but there is not a clear direction to what to shift to. He continued that “the conversation about the environment in Australia has not been about food at all, it has been about water and waste and solar power” and that is in

regard of governmental policy “since the focus of the sustainability branch is not on food at all”.

Katinka Day talked about the food system from the perspective of health, because she believes that it is “really closely linked with people's interaction with the food system”. She expressed that if people are more aware of the practices in the FS, they would have a “greater desire to see food as a way of feeding your body with nutrients”, but since there is a “lack of transparency”, consumers “are ignorant about the food system and the environment”.

Melissa Lawson made a recount of the development of the modern FS, characterised by a disconnect from the food and its producers, urbanization, modernizing and convenience. She expressed that there are many concerns around the FS that a lot of people seem to be unaware of, but this can be changed through education, for example the children who visit CERES, can later on pass on their knowledge to their families.

Jane expressed strong views against the current FS, claiming that it “is about to fall hard, so we can't rely on that system for our food and it is totally unsustainable and not something I want to put money towards”. She continued that with her advocacy, she informs people about the negative implications of the FS and promotes alternatives of it, through the “Neighbourhood Growers” activities for example.

#### 5.4.1.1. Governmental involvement

The governmental involvement in all aspects of the food system were evident to the experts, but they gave different levels of importance on its responsibility.

Greg Jacobs talked about the development of the FP to help create a strategy around Fair food and the FS, following the examples of “Europe, Canada, UK or USA”. He explained that the focus of the state government by now, has been mostly on healthy food, like health promotion on festivals, such as MOOMBA. Greg Jacobs stated that, since the rates of overweight and obesity has kept growing, there might be need for “more drastic action, looking overseas and we are talking about some of the ideas from there, like sugar tax”. Although, he reflects that he would prefer a more “holistic approach”, instead of “putting all the blame on sugar”. Furthermore, he gave an example of the success in reducing smoking rates over 30 years through

the use of “packaging, advertising, pricing”, showing that the government can oppose “multinational corporations” and he asks the rhetorical question “Why can't we do some of the similar things around food?”. Greg Jacobs continued that “Australians are used to being told what to do “ by following regulations like using helmets and seatbelts.

Katinka Day stated that she believes the influence on consumer behaviour should come from the government, especially in regards to health. For example, they're involved in composing the Australian dietary guidelines ADG, which are “built on 55000 peer-reviewed research articles”, but consumer awareness of those is low and there need s be more promotion of those.

Melissa Lawson recalled the assistance they received for founding and maintaining CERES over the years, from the lease of the land to receiving some grants money. She explained that also “the bureaucratic rules around food safety and insurance” have become more demanding. Another development she noticed is that the local councils are discussing “food strategy and food security”. When asked who carries more responsibility over the FS, Melissa Lawson replied that “it's everyone's responsibility, we are all caretakers, we all eat”. And we have to “understand the impact” of our choices.

Jane expressed that she is not very aware of the government's actions around urban gardening, including use of public land, because the “Neighbourhood Growers” avoided the bureaucratic hurdles by making agreements directly with landowners.

#### 5.4.1.2. Supermarkets influence

Katinka Day elaborated that supermarkets might have a stronger influence on the consumer choice, because there is not enough competition for them and there are only “ Coles and Woolworths and a bit ALDI”. They can also influence food pricing since they offer products on lower than their “actual cost”, by subsidizing with profits they make from other products. Furthermore, she stated that the government gives “preference to food manufacturers or supermarkets”.

#### 5.4.1.3. NGOs influence

Katinka Day described the way that CHOICE affects change by “advocating for consumers to be able to make informed decisions”, particularly around better labelling. Although they work on influencing the government, it is necessary that the “citizens become more involved”, which is why they run awareness campaigns to get the consumers more involved. She stated that this is very important “because the food system relies on people asking for change”.

Melissa Lawson described how CERES interacts with other non-profits, schools or municipalities, inspiring, educating and demonstrating how to implement sustainable food solutions. They offer consulting to organisations who want to implement similar models that fit their local environment, f.ex city farming in Queensland or other community gardens. Furthermore, they raise the food literacy in people, by offering different courses, workshops and volunteering opportunities. She shared that in her opinion, “CERES highlights the importance of the local economy and food system and how wonderful and inspiring small food community programs could be”.

#### 5.4.1.4. Food producers influence

Greg Jacobs imparted that when it comes to food production in Australia, the main driver has been the attitude to produce “better, cheaper, faster” and to export the surplus. Since they “have gone down the path of industrialized farming” the “focus have shifted away from quality to quantity and reducing cost”, which might be the reason for low popularity of organic production. The producers have to “cut costs somewhere and increase the yield”, even if it is at the expense of the “the wages of agricultural workers”.

According to Katinka Day, the government gives “more preference to food manufacturers or supermarkets”, than to consumer values, when it comes to taking policy decisions. This is why CHOICE aims to cooperate with food manufacturers “to get them to enact change as that has a very powerful effect on the food system”, because they have an “important role in terms of determining how people can buy, just by providing additional information or changing their own practices, providing transparency”.

#### 5.4.1.5. Land use

Land use is an important aspect of the FS, that can affect the interest in FC.

Both Greg Jacobs and Melissa Lawson made similar observations about the land use in the Melbourne area. Firstly, the disconnect with food production, as according to Greg Jacobs, it is done “somewhere faraway in the country”, which Melissa Lawson thought might be a reason, sustainability is low on the agenda, since there is no lack of agricultural land. Secondly, this might not be true for Melbourne in the long run, as Melissa Lawson stated that the city is “eating into our food bowl”, by expanding onto agricultural land. Greg Jacobs said on the topic that “it requires a real shift in the thinking on state level about growing locally but currently there is no strategic direction”

#### 5.4.1.6. Locality

Local production of food was a recurrent topic throughout the interviews with all the experts, whereas CERES and “Neighbourhood Growers” organisations aim at producing it, Greg Jacobs and CHOICE at regulating it, but all four spoke about its promotion as a positive development.

Greg Jacobs expanded that locality is still not “of interest of the average consumer”, but “at a higher level, like a high end-restaurant”, so the FP aims to promote it further. An integral part of the FP has been the “local food launchpad accelerator program”, supporting the development of business ideas for local entrepreneurs.

On the other hand, Katinka Day claimed that people “want to support local producers, buying products that are made or grown here, and previously the labels were failing to help them do this”.

#### 5.4.1.7. Food security

Although, food security might not be as big of an issue in developed countries and that is why it can be often overlooked, climate change and the diminishing returns from industrial farming, might change that.

Greg Jacobs related that before designing the City of Melbourne Food Policy 5 years ago, food security was not on the agenda. Since then they “have done some food

security mapping and profiling” and have “developed a Community food guide, mapping all the community food programs around the municipality, CSA, food rescues and more” to help vulnerable communities.

Melissa Lawson connected food security with “the environmental impact of producing food “ and land use and insisted those “need to be discussed hand in hand”.

#### **5.4.2. Consumer Culture category**

In this paper, consumer culture is understood as a combination of food culture and values connected to ethical consumption and FC.

According to Greg Jacobs, Melbourne is promoted as the “foodie capital of Australia”, where “the diversity of food, restaurants and café culture”, characterizes the identity of the city with an European vibe. Melissa Lawson confirmed that Melburnians “have quite a food savvy culture, full of restaurants and cafes and really rich multi-cultural community” with “growing interest of where food comes from”.

This heightened interest in food can have positive impact on raising FC as well.

##### **5.4.2.1. Food marketing and media**

The influence of food marketing and media on food culture and consumption are undisputed and two of the experts discussed that.

According to Katinka Day “marketing and influences by the media and food manufacturers” have played an integral role in shaping the Australian food culture as they didn’t “have the generations of food culture handed down” through families. She continued that this has created “mixed messages, contrasting food patterns and breeds distrust which then precludes people from being involved in the food system”. Melissa Lawson pointed out both positive and negative influences by marketing and media. On one hand there is a “very strong American influence on our culture, in terms of movies, tv and food”, but there is also positive impact by the “Jamie Olivers of the world “ or shows like “Masterchef”.

##### **5.4.2.2. Consumer values**

Greg Jacobs reflected that although “farming and growing food is part of the identity from the founding of the country” and was associated with certain values and

practices, similar to those of the current organic principles, the pursuit of “better cheaper faster” have changed that. Organic farming is “seen as something leftist” and “is what rich people can afford to buy”. Greg Jacobs stated that even if people are aware of “the benefits of organic on health and well-being”, they still see it as “something hippie and weird” and would rather buy cheaper food.

According to Katinka Day, the “proportion of Australians who want to have a positive impact on the food environment” is growing, but it is still “so difficult to be able to buy in line with your beliefs”, as “consumers’ values are not the first priority” for the government when ensuring transparency in the FS. She continued that the reason why Australians might be divided “in terms in what we believe in or what we value”, is due to the “lack of food culture”, combined with the diversity of people who “bring their own traditions”.

Melissa Lawson expressed beliefs that “reliance on the convenience” of fast and convenient foods, coupled with the disconnect with food production, makes it easier for people to have less respect for food and overconsume. One of the aims of CERES is to mitigate this, through gardening, which doesn’t have to be promoted just as being sustainable and better for the environment, but also as something “traditional”.

Jane expanded on this by saying that there has been a trend of growing interest in gardening, which might not be due to issues with the FS, since “people are not very knowledgeable in general in political things”, but because of a “back-to-the-old-days movement”, making “permaculture and knitting” trendy again.

#### **5.4.3. Food Labelling policies category**

Food Labelling policies may play a crucial role in aiding or limiting the expressions of FC, as food labelling have great importance in consumer purchasing behavior, especially in Australia where the majority of purchases are made in a supermarket setting.

Greg Jacobs talked about the high saturation of labels on products on the market, f.ex. “low fat, low sugar, low GI, high in this vitamin, endorsed by whomever”, causing “people are more weary about labelling”. According to Katinka Day, due to lack of regulation the consumers “mistrust in labels” is becoming an issue.

#### 5.4.3.1. Free range labelling issues

Katinka Day related that recently the regulations around free range labelling loosened to the extent that they “allowed for higher stocking density and there is no requirement for chickens to go outside”. To counter that CHOICE has launched an app allowing consumers “to check which brands are genuinely free range”.

Melissa Lawson stated that “some companies can use the labeling for their advantage”.

#### 5.4.3.2. Organic labelling issues

Greg Jacobs discussed that unlike the campaign around buying local Australian produce there has been no comprehensive awareness campaign around organic food labeling.

According to Katinka Day, the confusion around organic food labelling is made worse due to there being “6 or 7 organic certifications and some brands are trying to use the word organic without having a certification” and the certifying bodies are responsible for promotion of their own labels.

Melissa Lawson confirmed that some products can be called “natural organic” without following the organic principles, but if people are “empowered” to “know what to look for, flip it over, look for a certifying body” they “can see through the misuse of words”.

#### 5.4.3.3. Country of origin labelling

Both Greg Jacobs and Katinka Day, talked about the newly implemented labelling for local Australian products and the awareness campaign accompanying it as a successful program to aid consumers who “want to support local producers”.

#### 5.4.3.4. Health labelling

Greg Jacobs described two labels that have been used to guide consumers in making healthier food choices, the “Heart Foundation Tick” program, which for 25 years have marked heart-healthy products, and “the “Green Light, Eat Right” which

is a traffic light program around healthy eating, in the municipal recreational services”.

Katinka Day discussed the new “Health Star Rating” label, which helps people choose products with better nutritional value, but there is still “some junk food, labeled with high star rating, which is distorting the system and eroding people's trust”.

## 5.5. Theme 5: FC development

This theme was designed to present the answers when the experts expressed more direct views on FC, either prompted or unprompted.

When asked about the level of FC in Melbourne, Greg Jacobs replied that it is low, but it is hopefully changing. He gave examples of “businesses starting to respond” to consumer demand for local Australian food, the success of the food box scheme by CERES, delivering local and organic products, and the proportion of people with an interest in growing their own food. He connected the meaning of FC to two concepts more popular in the Australian context “fair food” and “food sovereignty”. Greg Jacobs reflected that there is a need to “define it better so then we can relate it to the public and then people can invest in it and become a citizen”.

Katinka Day related the concept of FC to the activities of CHOICE, as a consumer organization, heavily relying on citizen engagement to affect change in the FS.

Melissa Lawson stated that in her opinion the level of FC is quite high amongst the “staff, volunteers and customers” of CERES and “even if it is small with the customers, that's a start, as just seeing the site it sparks a lot of questions”.

### 5.5.1. Barriers to raising FC category

When asked about the barriers to raising FC, Katinka Day considered as the most significant one that “people don't want to know”, since there are so many issues in the FS and they “just don't have that capacity to be worried about all of those things and then do something about it.” In order to counteract that, there needs to be “systems in place to harness the individuals who do want to create change” in the different problematic areas according to their individual interest.

### 5.5.2. Opportunities for raising FC category

Melissa Lawson talked about different opportunities to raise FC, such as: maintaining the traditions around gardening; “education in schools around environment and food systems”; getting involved in the local councils, supporting “grassroots organisations, support community gardens and NGOs; inspiring other members of the community through sharing; shopping “smart”, “because that’s where you impact the big corporations and they need to make adjustments”.

## 5.6. Summary of results

- Theme 1: FC aspects on the individual level
  - Consumer characteristics: According to the experts, the Australian consumer might not be prone to drastic political action, but there is a lot of power to shape the food supply by buying sustainably produced products
  - Consumer awareness: Although there might be lower awareness about the environmental implication of the FS, the awareness of the treatment of animals have been high enough to drive the demand of free range eggs
  - Consumer purchasing behavior: The experts agree that although high prices act as a deterrent to ethical consumption, there is a growing trend in buying organic, free range, ethically and locally produced foods
- Theme 2: FC aspects on the social level: Organisations like CERES and the “Neighbourhood Growers” provide an important space for developing FC through role modeling and communal spirit
- Theme 3: FC aspects on the settings level
  - Urban agriculture: Community, home and school gardens have an important role to raise awareness, educate, improve food security and allow people to express their FC. As there is a lot of skill needed to be able to manage a garden, providing better education to create home gardens or developing community gardens might be necessary.

- Food access points: Convenience is important for the Australian consumer and there is a diverse network of restaurants, cafes and markets, but still the majority of food provisioning is done in supermarkets, which hold a lot of power between the two main chains Coles and Woolworths.
- Theme 4: FC aspects on the macro-level.
  - Food System: The consensus is that there is a need for a major change in the FS in order to have a sustainable development, and both government and citizens have the power to instigate that change and the food market will follow. A possible development is to encourage the growth of local networks, while preserving agricultural land to ensure the future food security.
  - Consumer Culture: due to the lack of traditional food culture in Australians, consumers can be strongly influenced by food marketing and American media, but nevertheless there is a growing trend in trying to reconnect to an old-fashioned way of life, through gardening, preserving, etc. There is a vast cultural diversity present, also through numerous food outlets, which can provide both opportunities and barriers to developing FC.
  - Food Labelling policies: Labeling can be an important tool aiding ethical consumption, but the "high saturation" of labels with a lack of regulation on the Australian market, creates confusion and mistrust amongst the consumers
- Theme 5: FC development: Raising FC can be done by providing consumers with information and making it easier for them to take civic action and practising ethical consumerism, through organisations like CHOICE, CERES, "Neighbourhood Growers" and Local Councils.

## 6. Discussion

### 6.1. Theme 1: FC aspects on the individual level

#### 6.1.1. Consumer characteristics

According to the experts, the Australian consumer might not be prone to drastic political action, but there is a lot of power to influence the food supply by buying sustainably produced products. In order to investigate FC, the general attitudes of Australians towards taking political or social actions needs to be assessed. Public participation defines citizens as “being an active agent, beyond being a mere responder or passive follower”, where they can influence the democratic process through deliberation, where all parties involved discuss issues on equal grounds and find solutions together (Holmes, 2011). The Australian Survey of Political Engagement Findings indicate that citizens see themselves as “observers rather than participants in formal politics”, as 9 out of 10 believe they have no influence on the decisions of the federal level of government, while 7 out of 10 considered it the same for local governments (Evans et al., 2013). Similarly to other “contemporary democracies including Britain, the United States and Finland, over 25% of respondents reported rather a negative disposition towards politics and politicians (Evans et al., 2013). On the other hand, 8 in 10 were positive about “representative democracy”, allowing for “consultation, compromise and democratic judgement”, especially if it is offered in a “participatory, open and perhaps local” approach (Evans et al., 2013). This indicates that Australians exhibit a high interest in participating in the public life, if given access.

It was also deemed important to establish the actual current participation in different groups. The VicHealth summary report (2010) presented that 19% of Australian adults participated in 1 or more civic groups, with majority in “trade union, professional and technical associations” (7%), “environmental or animal welfare groups” (5%), followed by “corporate or tenants’ associations”. Furthermore, 1 in 3 citizens of the state of Victoria volunteer in local groups, similar to national levels (VicHealth, 2010). Most people volunteer at sports and recreation organisations (37%), followed by 22% in welfare/community organisations, while environment (7%)

and animal welfare (5%) organisations were less popular (Segbedzi, 2015). These numbers indicate that although there is some level of interest in civic participation, there is room for improvement, especially when it comes to interest in animal treatment and environmental protection organisations.

### **6.1.2. Consumer awareness**

According to the experts the environmental awareness of issues linked to the FS of the Australian consumer might be low, but on the other hand the awareness of the treatment of animals have driven the demand for free range eggs, bringing change to the market. It could be an indication that raising awareness of environmental issues, could elicit a similar civic action. First though, it is important to ascertain the current level of awareness and specific areas that might need more attention.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2010), there is quite a high level of concern for environmental problems amongst Australian adults (82%), although only 26% considered the “condition of the natural environment” as bad. Moreover, a major proportion of the participants (73%) were concerned about climate change, while 53% considered that the natural environment was declining (ABS, 2010). Although these numbers represent a relatively high level of concern, only 34% of the respondents participated in any kind of environmental activity, whereas the most common one was signing a petition (17%), donating money (14%), expressing concern to the responsible authorities (10%) and only 2% demonstrating in an environmental rallies (ABS, 2010).

Since another important way to engage in FC could be through ethical consumerism, there is a need to measure the awareness of environmental issues directly linked with the FS. A survey of the Australian public, found that they believe that “decreased use of packaging by food manufacturers” is the most helpful for the environment, as opposed to the least helpful which is a reduction in meat consumption (Lea & Worsley, 2007). When asked about specific actions they took to help the environment, composting was the most common one, while buying organic food was the least performed one (Lea & Worsley, 2007). The results indicate that Australians might have low awareness of major environmental issues caused by

meat production and conventional agriculture (Lea & Worsley, 2007). Thus, raising awareness about these issues has the potential to increase commitment to FC.

### **6.1.3. Consumer purchasing behavior**

The experts agree that although high prices act as a deterrent to ethical consumption, there is a growing trend in buying organic, free range, ethically and locally produced foods. According to Lockie and colleagues (2002), consumers are faced with “a dazzling array of competing discourses on food, nutrition, environment etc, together with an equally dazzling array of competing desires, preferences, anxieties and beliefs, as well as the rather practical issues of availability, convenience and cost”. Australian consumers were found to be further confused when making food choices, due to the claims of “apologists for industrialised agriculture” against organic production (Lockie et al., 2002)

Buying organic food can be viewed as an integral part of sustainable consumption encouraging the growth of FC. According to the Australian Organic Market Report (2017), Australia is the country with the most land (27 million hectares) under certified organic management, but with a large proportion of the produce intended for export, the Australian consumer has only the 16th biggest spending on organic food per capita (Lawson et al., 2017). Moreover, when surveyed about the household spending on organic food, the minority of households (14%) spend 40% and over, followed by 41% of households, spending 10-40% of their budget and lastly, 41% spending 5% or under, indicating low to moderate organic share (Lawson et al., 2017). Consumers stated that the main reasons to buy organic was due to awareness about the health implications (51%), followed by awareness about the environmental impact (42%) (Lawson et al., 2017). Furthermore, a major perceived benefit (68%) was that organic production is environmentally friendly (Lawson et al., 2017). When shoppers elaborated on the barriers restricting their organic purchasing, cost was the most significant with 76%, followed by trust that the product is organic with 43% and access/convenience with 32% (Lawson et al., 2017).

A study investigating the “mainstream” consumers from a disadvantaged area of Sydney and their beliefs and actions towards sustainable and healthy food, found that there can be a large gap between intent and actual behavior (Dixon & Isaacs,

2013). While there was desire to buy locally produced, Australian or fresh produce, in actuality preference is given to purchasing cheap, tasty, processed foods, as the food budget was given less importance than maintaining a “socially acceptable standard of living “ (Dixon & Isaacs, 2013). Furthermore, that authors reflected on the political context of these results and proposed some important policy amendments (Dixon & Isaacs, 2013). The Australian government often uses the argument of the negative perception of the citizens of the “nanny state” as their reason for not intervening within the FS more and instead focusing on educating the consumers on healthy diets (Dixon & Isaacs, 2013). According to Dixon and Isaacs (2013) there is a need for better regulation of “fresh produce, imported fresh produce and processed food”, as to help both consumers and Australian producers pay and receive fair price for sustainable and nutritious food. Moreover, it is necessary to reflect the changes in cost of the sustainable food basket in the discussions for raising the minimum wage and combine that with a promotional campaign linking the raises with the ability to purchase a better food basket (Dixon & Isaacs, 2013). Lastly, the government should act as a role model to the developing ecological citizens by implementing the practice of procuring fresh and local produce (Dixon & Isaacs, 2013). Following their results, it becomes evident that although FC is an important driver for change, it needs government support through direct and indirect policies, taxation and subsidies.

## 6.2. Theme 2: FC aspects on the social level

Organisations like CERES and the “Neighbourhood Growers” provide an important space for developing FC through role modeling and communal spirit. According to VicHealth (2012), people can feel empowered by participating in activities where they share interest with others, especially being engaged in a democratic process, having a positive impact on their health. The created social cohesion is rooted in “trust, reciprocity and participation”, making it even more likely for people to get engaged with social and political life (VicHealth, 2012).

### 6.3. Theme 3: FC aspects on the settings level

#### 6.3.1. Urban agriculture

Community, home and school gardens play an important role in raising awareness, education, improvement of food security and allowing people to express their FC. Over the past decade, urban agriculture has become a site for “grassroots citizenship”, as it can “challenge hegemonic ideologies, resist capitalistic relations, and assert rights to space for citizens marginalized along race and class lines” (Ghose & Pettygrove, 2014). Urban agriculture in relation to FC can be divided into community and home gardening.

Community gardens can be conducive to “reconnection“ with community and food production, thus facilitating an appropriation of “sustainable living practices” and development of ecological citizenship (Turner, 2011). Through the physical engagement with soil, water and plants, the gardening process “moves beyond notions of sustainable/ethical consumption to intimately implicate and embed us all in the natural world” (Turner, 2011). Apart from improving the environment in the city, community gardens “promote social inclusion and community-building” and the development of “the evolution of socio-cultural sustainability” (Turner, 2011).

There are a number of challenges limiting the development of community gardens, such as societal attitudes, government policies and limited land access (Pearson & Hodgkin, 2010). Hence, governmental support can alleviate those through promotion, de-regulation, providing access to public areas, education and assistance.

Although community gardens and their impact on the social environment have an important role in improving people's wellbeing and FC practises, the importance of individuals tending their own home gardens should not be underestimated (Turner, 2011). Wise (2014) found that 52% of Australian households are growing some of their food, but there might be a need for further education and skills-building, since they reported low yields and a high dropout rate (Wise, 2014). Those gardeners are mostly motivated by “health, taste and cost savings”, while environmental benefits are not considered so important, although they think it is a good way to avoid food

waste (Wise, 2014). Promoting the environmental benefits and the link to the FS might help raise FC in current gardeners and act as an additional motivation for starting a garden. Although space is perceived as a barrier by many, only 11% of private households live in apartments, likely to be lacking open space (Wise, 2014). As there is a lot of skill needed to be able to manage a garden, providing better education to create home gardens or developing community gardens can aid the development of FC.

### **6.3.2. Food access points**

Convenience is important for the Australian consumer, hence there is a diverse network of restaurants, cafes, markets and grocery stores and this vast network is supplied by ca. 3748 food businesses, registered in the City of Melbourne (2017). Still the majority of food provisioning is done in supermarkets, accounting for 63% of household spending (Spencer & Kneebone, 2012). As discussed by the interviewed experts, Leigh and Triggs (2016) found that Coles and Woolworths hold 73% of the market share, which contributes to raising inequality and should be better regulated by competition and consumer laws (Leigh & Triggs, 2016). This can help ensure easier access to the market for smaller food businesses and more diverse opportunities for Australians to practice ethical consumerism.

## **6.4. Theme 4: FC aspects on the macro-level**

### **6.4.1. Food System**

The need for a systematic change is quite evident both throughout the literature and from the expert interviews, but the global complexity of the issue makes it hard to address and find solutions. Active citizens have to be a part of this innovation process and a possible path for that could be through encouraging sustainable agricultural practices, especially on a local level.

According to the Melbourne's Foodprint report, the city foodbowl, or the area adjacent to the city, can be an integral part in ensuring the future food supply, with its "significant capacity" for food production (Sheridan et al., 2016). As the experts discussed, the foodbowl is currently under threat of the "urban sprawl" and it might

be necessary to limit it through increasing the urban density “by about 50% over the next 20 years, saving 180,000 hectares of land” (Sheridan et al., 2016).

Encouraging local production of food through policy, can be an important development for raising FC by “promoting greater food self sufficiency, adding to the resilience of the food system, re-engaging consumers with the source of their food as well as lessening the environmental footprint of food due to reduced food miles (Pearson et al., 2011). Having active food citizens is crucial, as it is not only necessary for their greater participation in the production and distribution of food, but also managing the changes of consumer expectations, as there might be a diminishing variety of products available (Pearson et al., 2011).

The need for a holistic approach towards food has been addressed by the city of Melbourne by compiling a food policy with the help of citizen participation, aiming to improve the health and wellbeing of the community by developing a FS which is “secure, healthy, sustainable, thriving and socially inclusive” (City of Melbourne Council, 2012). It has 5 central themes with a number of planned activities in each, that have just been evaluated in a 4 year report (City of Melbourne Council, 2017). In the first theme of building food security, it was measured that 9% of Melburnians “experience food insecurity and food-related stress”. In an attempt to alleviate this, a Community Food Guide was published, mapping out available social food provisioning enterprises (City of Melbourne Council, 2017). The next theme gravitated around healthy food availability, and main activities centered around ensuring healthy catering at Moomba Festival 2016 (City of Melbourne Council, 2017). The third theme was focused on developing “a sustainable and resilient food system”, aiming at encouraging urban agriculture and in 2015, they measured that 58.3% of citizens produced their own food. The next theme revolved around developing local food economy, and as mentioned by Greg Jacobs the The Local Food Launchpad 2015 was started to assist local entrepreneurs in building a sustainable business (City of Melbourne Council, 2017). The last theme is about celebration, to help build community and encouraging tourism (City of Melbourne Council, 2017). It is a comprehensive policy, addressing a lot of the pressing issues around the FS in Melbourne, but there might be a benefit in investing into raising FC

in the municipality through promoting awareness of FS issues and providing education and skills building.

#### **6.4.2. Consumer Culture**

According to the experts, due to the lack of traditional food culture in Australians, consumers can be strongly influenced by food marketing and American media, but nevertheless there is a growing trend in trying to reconnect to old-fashioned way of life, through gardening, preserving, etc. There is a vast cultural diversity present, also through numerous food outlets, which can provide both opportunities and barriers to developing FC.

When looking into the Australian food culture, the effects of the globalized FS are quite evident and especially the influences of multi-national companies, or the McDonaldization, as it was coined by Finkelstein (2003). Paradoxically, although the country has been developing as a multicultural society since the 70s, this coupled with the technological revolution in food production, has brought on also a homogenization to the food culture (Finkelstein, 2003). The growth of the fast food industry, exemplified by McDonalds with 700 outlets and holding 42% of the “3.5 billion fast-food market”, with 1 out of 3 meals eaten out, can to some extent be attributed to the dual income families, but also the desire for ethnic foods shifting the interest from British cuisine, to Italian as the most popular, followed by Asian ones (Finkelstein, 2003). Those cuisines are favoured due to their perceived healthiness, as the middle class has shifted focus to a low-fat and additive free diet (Finkelstein, 2003). Other important influences in shaping the Australian food culture have been food television programs, magazines and supermarkets/department stores food halls (Finkelstein, 2003). On the other hand, the industrialization of food production has allowed for the increased consumption of pre-prepared foods, which seems to bring a division to food culture, between gourmet and mass-produced (Finkelstein, 2003). The author argues that both those trends are indicative of the McDonaldization of the food culture, as standardization has been implemented throughout most food outlets, ensuring food safety, predictability and consistency, but on the other hand limiting the creativity and the enjoyment of food, and an emerging trend shows that the interest in these kinds of fast foods is starting to stall (Finkelstein, 2003). This

development can be indicative of the opportunities to limit the influences of the big businesses and encourage the growth of food diversity in relation with the values of FC, namely local, seasonal, ethically produced and diversified.

### **6.4.3. Food Labelling policies**

Labeling can be an important tool aiding ethical consumption, but the "high saturation" of labels with a lack of regulation on the Australian market creates confusion and mistrust amongst the consumers. That becomes more evident as 33% of Australian consumers always read the labels when buying a product for the first time, which is related to their dietary concerns, with most viewed information on "the best before/use by date, the amount of fat, country of origin" (The Senate, 2015). Moreover, 67% of Australians somewhat or strongly agree that they trust the information on food labels, as opposed to 18% who reported to somewhat or strongly disagreeing (FSANZ, 2015).

Although price can be an expected deterrent in purchasing organic, trust in the origin of the products might be due to the complicated nature of organic certification in Australia. Firstly, there is no legal requirement on the domestic market to have a certification in order to label a product as organic, leading to diminishing consumer trust (Lawson et al., 2017). Secondly, the Australian government has accredited six certifying bodies: AUS-QUAL; Australian Certified Organic (ACO); Bio-Dynamic Research Institute (BDRI); National Association for Sustainable Agriculture Australia (NASAA) Certified Organic (NCO); Organic Food Chain (OFC); Safe Food Production Queensland (SFPQ) (Lawson et al., 2017). Considering those issues around certification, consumer knowledge and vigilance are necessary to avoid fraud, although a large proportion (59%) are aware that certification logos are a "guarantee of authenticity", only 44% look for them (Lawson et al., 2017). This low awareness and mistrust might be eroding people's ability to act out FC through purchasing organic food. It is becoming evident that the implementation of a national organic standard might be necessary in order to decrease the vulnerability to fraud for consumers, while alleviating the confusion and lack of confidence in the

certifications, but also strengthening the organic brand on the domestic and international markets (Do, 2016).

Furthermore, although front-of-pack labels are broadly used on products, consumers reported relatively low interest in the ones giving nutritional claims, with 40% not looking at those when purchasing a product for the first time, while the majority expressed interest in the country of origin labelling (80%) and the brand (53%) (FSANZ, 2015). These results could indicate that changing the regulations to minimize the use of nutritional claims can be beneficial in reducing the visual overload on products and thus help consumer focus on what is more important to them.

Another controversy has developed around free range labelling in Australia. According to publications on CHOICE's website, due to the lack of production and labelling standards, there is no guarantee that the animals labelled free range have had a better life than the conventionally farmed ones (Herron & Clemons, 2014). They found out that the regulations for stocking density was not followed in the production of around 213 million of the free range eggs on the market (Day, 2017). Moreover, the situation is not substantially better in free range meat production, as for pigs the specification of "outdoors" includes "paddocks with shelter such as arks or huts" and for poultry there is no assurance for other welfare provisions, like debeaking (Herron & Clemons, 2014). Also, there are around 4 accredited certifiers for poultry, pigs, cows and cattle, adding up to the saturation of logos on products (Herron & Clemons, 2014). These developments are likely to undermine trust in the free range products and lead to a decrease in FC practised through ethical consumerism, so better government regulation is necessary.

## 6.5. Theme 5: FC development

According to the expert interviews, informing and raising awareness is crucial to enable people to practice their FC through taking civic actions and practising ethical consumerism, and this can be facilitated by organisations like CHOICE, CERES, "Neighbourhood Growers", state or local government.

Another NGO that has gained a lot of traction in the food environment is the Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance (AFSA), with the aim to help build a fair, diverse and democratic food system for the benefit of all Australians. In 2012, they started compiling “The People’s Food Plan” through the members of the “Fair Food Movement”, who participate on their forums, pushing for change in the FS. The document expresses the “collective right to food sovereignty”, allowing people to participate in a democratic process for taking decisions for the future of food in Australia and was started as a response to the National Food Plan, which was seen to still favour “big business”. “The People’s Food Plan” maps out the steps for “sustainable transformation”, of the system where health, equity, democracy and participation are vital. The government should take actions to regulate for “fair and safe food”, reduce waste, localization of the FS and addressing its environmental implications, providing food literacy education in schools, preserving land, and diversifying the food market with equal opportunities for all, etc. It can be said that the AFSA is both driven by the FC of its members and it is advocating for raising FC in others, f. ex. through introducing food literacy education and including people in the decision-making process.

Raising food literacy might be an important tool to addressing several of the issues connected with low FC. As low food literacy can be connected to higher reliance on convenience and fast food, it has major implications on the health of the population and their active participation in the FS (Pendergast & Dewhurst, 2012). The authors stress the importance of formal food literacy education as a tool for informing about the “interplay between social, political, economic, and environmental aspects of many food issues” (Pendergast & Dewhurst, 2012). Investing in a school reform to introduce food literacy can have a long-term benefit for the country, as it helps shape informed food citizens (Pendergast & Dewhurst, 2012).

## 7. Conclusion

During the exploration of FC in Melbourne Australia, the expert qualitative interviews uncovered a complex context in the area of food. With the help of the Socio-ecological framework the different aspects of FC were divided on the four

layers impacting food choices, namely individual, social, settings and macro-environment. On an individual level, consumers hold a lot of power to exercise FC through ethical consumerism, as long as there is enough awareness raised about the implications of the current FS and ideally combined with price regulation to minimize the gap between conventionally and sustainably produced food. Furthermore, consumers can be influenced on the social level through role models and be encouraged to participate in community-building and food-related enterprises, developing social cohesion. Although the Australian setting, which is characterized by a high saturation of food outlets, might encourage people to rely on convenience, investing in the development of urban agriculture might elicit the practice of other expressions connected to FC. Both providing space and gardening education, as well as regulation of the concentration of the market to ensure equal access for everyone, might be viable policy directions. Lastly, the macro-environment can have a crucial impact on people's ability to act out their FC, whereas raising the perceived value of sustainable foods and ensuring the trustworthiness of labelling can aid the development of a sustainable and resilient FS. A citizen-NGO-government cooperation might be necessary to oppose the globalized FS pressures and build local food supply networks, favoring ethical over monetary values.

The conclusions of this study are limited due to the relative novelty of the research area of FC and the small number of interviews, but they uncover important issues that need further research. Since the topic of FC, revolves around the Australian citizen, a comprehensive quantitative and/or qualitative study could be done to be able to investigate possible steps for future development and advise policy-makers.

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## APPENDIX I Interview transcripts

### **Interview with Greg Jacobs, Team Leader of Health Projects, Health and Well-being Branch, City of Melbourne**

**Sonya:** What activities have been going on in the 5 themes of the Food policy in Melbourne?

The Food Policy is about 5 years old and we have an annual action plan and every year we outline what actions we have taken and are going to take. Some of it is like an audit of what the organisation is doing, but some of it is new things being driven by the food policy.

**Greg:** On the first theme: around food security, we haven't done any mapping before, we had no idea about the food security issues in Melbourne, particularly access to food and vulnerable communities. So we have done some food security mapping and profiling, where we have looked into research and married that with information around food deserts. We survey residents to find out who is experiencing food insecurity and not only people who are accessing food aid, but also people who might be employing coping strategies or skipping meals. We have developed a Community food guide, mapping all the community food programs around the manipulability, CSA, food rescues and more.

On the second theme: Another program we have developed is the Green light, eat right!, which is a traffic light program around healthy eating, in the municipal recreational services. The program has been running longer than the Food Policy. Recreation services are about promoting health and well-being as well but they focus more on physical health, so food is just an extension on what they are trying to achieve.

Theme three: with on urban agriculture. In Melbourne there is no space in the CBD so we had to respond on urban agriculture in a different way. Apart from the community gardens, the Food Policy has partnered with the engineering department to create street gardens on lane ways, medium strips, so gardening in different than the traditional allotment gardens. We have developed neighbourhood gardens, some local technology Food Walls (Biofilta) .

around the 4th theme local food launch pad is an accelerator program, so one of the things we realized that the Fair food is a new concept in Australia with focus on local systems and we realized the need to support new ideas and entrepreneurs. We support people with ideas to develop them and refine to business ready, those ideas that support the notions in the Food Policy.

The last theme around celebration, encompassing all sort of events, like Moomba where we have tried to encourage healthy eating or do some food rescue there.

**Sonya:** what are the characteristics of the consumer in Melbourne, f. ex. demographics, food culture, attitudes that makes them different from other areas in AUS or globally?

**Greg:** The first thing I think of is that one of the things that Melbourne is known for its restaurants and is deemed as a foodie capital of Australia. Mel is characterized by the diversity of food, restaurants, café culture are central of Melbourne identity and how we promote ourselves as cultured and viewed as an European city. This is part of the reason why we developed the Food Policy since we didn't have a strategy before and the conversation around Fair food is new here, people don't talk about the food systems, as much as in Europe, Canada, UK or USA, where the conversation is much more advanced. I can see that there is a good roadmap to follow from those countries as of how we can further the conversation around food. There has been some developments though, especially around healthy food, where the conversation has been driven by state government and there a lot of resources to support the notions around healthy food.

The food security conversation has progressed in more recent years, particularly around vulnerable communities, which might struggle with putting food on the table, but it is still relatively new conversation. Melbourne has focused more on ethical issues like treatment of animals, f. ex. free-range eggs or meat. The idea of local food is also part of the conversation, but probably at a higher level, like a high end-restaurant, where they talk about the meat or wine, how they have been sourced. But it is not of interest of the average consumer, so one of the focuses of the Food Policy is to facilitate this conversation.

The system needs to change are there are many consequences of how the food is produced, whether they are environmental, social or health-related.

**Sonya:** Does developing food citizenship in the general public has importance on policy level?

**Greg:** That's the way you could really make the biggest change, if people are asking for change then government and business will respond. As the example of free range eggs, now when you try to purchase eggs might be more difficult to find caged than free range and it has become the norm in the last 5-10 years. That has been lead by consumers demand, because of their concern of the treatment of animals. So if people show the same concern for other facets of the food system we know that things will change. We know that people want to make these changes, that they want to be more connected to food, that's the feedback we get that there is a disconnected that the way food is produced is hidden from people. People are becoming more informed from where their food comes. Climate change and environment is on the agenda here. Regarding food you can twist the conversation according to your audience, f. ex. if speaking with sustainability branch or community service. Food is a really useful tool for having broad conversations about all sorts of impacts.

**Sonya:** What do you think is the average level of food citizenship in Melbourne? Low, medium, high?

**Greg:** If I am honest I would say low, but I'm hopeful as I see it changing. You only have to look around supermarkets and other markets here and how they are pitching themselves as sourcing Australian local food f. ex. There is a want from consumers and businesses are starting to respond. I think it is going to explode in years to come and now we are just scratching the surface. Places like CERES, who do a lot of things like food box and there the take up of their schemes is growing. Also people want to grow their own food and make good choices. Letting them and creating opportunities and giving skills oh how to do that is a key role of the local government

**Sonya:** Do you think that is how the consumer express their food citizenship and what other ways you can think of?

**Greg:** Over 52% of people grow their own food in Melbourne and we asked further questions about how much and what they grow. More than half of people in Melbourne are doing it and even a lot of those people who are living in apartments, so they are growing on balconies and small areas. You don't need a big patch of land. They probably want some connection with the environment and making the difference, or it is a food security issue, or healthy eating.

The example of working with the events branch at Moomba has informed us about the results from the surveys about peoples experience and some of the questions they ask is about the food and the feedback they received was about the lack of healthy food offered there. And they requested help from our branch to help with that. Further they broadened the work to include the food waste and rescue on the festivals.

**Sonya:** When the home-gardeners were asked to rank the top 5 benefits for home gardening, the results were centred around their health, the taste, freshness so on. Environmental impact was not mentioned. Why do you think that is?

**Greg:** My guess would be that maybe because when they are growing on such a small scale they don't perceive that what they are doing is having an environmental impact. We know that every bit

helps and we know that the industrialized system has a massive impact on the environment, so I suppose even if they are growing only herbs that still makes a difference. The conversation around food and the environment is still in its infancy here so I don't think that people have joined the dots. The conversation about the environment in Australia has not been about food at all, it has been about water and waste and solar power. Food is not a blip on the radar, so I don't think the consumers connect it at all. They may be doing it about their health. I suppose when there is a more comprehensive campaign on a larger level or when state or federal government give more incentives for growing your own food or linking that to environmental benefits. We experience the same thing internally, since the focus of the sustainability branch is not on food at all. We are the only ones having that conversation internally, while when you see the numbers of the negative impact of food production it is hard to ignore. That's a decision of the organisation but now we are trying to change internally, so we are not only trying to educate the public but also internally. Maybe it is just a symptom of where the environmental discussion is in Australia. I think it is different overseas?

**Sonya:** Yes definitely in Europe, but maybe it is a matter of free space. There is not so much space so we really need to tackle the problems as they come, because you can't hide it somewhere far away.

**Greg:** That's what we do here, the production of food happens somewhere faraway in the country or on the outskirts of the metropolitan areas. A good report is Foodprint Melbourne and it highlights about building housing on top of agricultural land. That's some of the information that hits the public. They have tried to cap the growth of the city but is it not possible. It requires a real shift in the thinking on state level about growing locally but currently there is no strategic direction.

**Sonya:** Another topic that seems not to be so popular as it is in Europe is about organic. The organic report cites that consumers state that the number 1 barrier to buying organic is price, but second is trust?

**Greg:** I reflect that in Australia, farming and growing food is part of the identity from the founding of the country. Australians have always wanted to be the best, so producing better cheaper faster has been the motivation. One of the big drivers is about exporting those things. The focus have shifted away from quality to quantity and reducing cost. In supermarkets it is all about the lowest price. So you have to cut costs somewhere and increase the yield and one of the cost of that the discussion around organic. We used to farm that way but we have gone down the path of industrialized farming and now it may be seen as something leftist. Organic is what rich people can afford to buy. So if the psyche is getting the cheapest and feed your family, even if you understand the benefits of organic on your health and well-being. We are seeing a shift to more organic way of production to go back to what once was. It is probably a bit different overseas where they have continued to stick to some of the same principles. It is like we are rediscovering the quality local food.

**Sonya:** But why do you think they don't trust the labelling?

**Greg:** I don't really know, but some of the things I can think of is that there might be some confusion about labelling here, because if you go to any market or supermarket here, most of the items here will

have some labelling on them about low fat, low sugar, low GI, high in this vitamin, endorsed by whomever. F. ex. on wine there are all these gold labels, so maybe there is a bit of overkill around labelling and so people are more weary about labelling. I don't think there has been any concerted education campaign done about labelling and what people should be looking for. In Aus there has been a national campaign about buying Australian. There is the potential to include organic discussion in that if it is backed by federal government. Another example I think of is the Heart Foundation Tic program up until few years ago, where they were marketing foods which we perceived as heart healthy and people trusted that. So it can be done but I don't think it has ever been done about organic. It is something hippie and weird but it is becoming more mainstream. It is shame that is still more expensive, but there is always some hidden cost. Just because there is saving at the checkout doesn't mean that there hasn't been a cost somewhere along the line, f. ex. there have been issues recently with the wages of agricultural workers.

**Sonya:** What barriers do you perceive for raising food citizenship?

**Greg:** It is still a new conversation and we don't yet have a name for what this, what I call Fair food, but other colleagues would be calling it something else, like sustainable food. The idea of Fair resonates with the Australians and there is a want to grow in that direction. I think we need to name it and define it better so then we can relate it to the public better and then people can invest in it and become a citizen. I am interested how it is defined in other countries as here in Australia food citizenship is not known.

**Sonya:** I think it is a new term, I haven't heard in Denmark, but there is a lot more commitment to it already, both individually and on government level. But maybe it is easier there because it is a small homogeneous population. Here there are a lot more people with diverse demographic background ...

**Greg:** What we are clear about here in Australia, we talk about the industrialised food system and we want to shift and change from that, but we haven't quite defined what we want to shift to, so people can buy into that. Another term we use here is food sovereignty there is the Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance, maybe that resonates more with people. I need to do some more research into how other cities have framed this issue and what is the development.

**Sonya:** In Denmark there is a lot of interest and health promotion and they are also a bit more strict with labelling and the Danes have high trust in it. Of course there is a difference between Copenhagen and the rest of the country, but organic or sustainable food is very much mainstream, but also as I said food production is a bit more visible there.....

**Greg:** While here that is not the case. Still some of the campaigning has been about shining a light on the treatment of animals and how the food choices it impacts them. The idea of food citizenship sounds good but the citizen of what? It has to be better defined, so I can become a member of that.

**Sonya:** There also seems to be quite a high number of vegetarians and vegans here?

**Greg:** It will be interesting to find their motivation become vegetarians, is it about the treatment of animals or eating healthy or the environment.

**Sonya:** What about the high rates of overweight and obesity, do you think that could be influenced by higher food citizenship?

**Greg:** The main push around food in the past ten years has been about healthier food, due to those numbers. It is not new but there is no success there as the numbers keep growing. It requires more drastic action, looking overseas and we are talking about some of the ideas from there, like sugar tax. Maybe it is a path we need to follow as well. We are all eating more processed foods and if the tax is about getting businesses to reformulate that...One of the issues I have with the notions of sugar tax is that it is putting all the blame on sugar. Sugar plays a part, but the idea that it is solely responsible it is short-sighted. There needs to be more holistic approach. We have seen that with the focus around fat in the past, where companies reduced the amount fat but then replaced with something else, like sugar. If you put a sugar tax they might put back the fat.

I think food citizenship is a very interesting topic.

**Sonya:** If consumers are educated and pushing by voting with their money, then governments don't have to take all the responsibility especially to oppose corporate business.

**Greg:** I think a good example in Australia where government has done a lot is how they reduced the rates of smoking over the past 30 years. Around packaging, advertising, pricing and all that you can do to influence people's outcomes. There is a road map there that you can follow with food. Why can't we do some of the similar thing around food? The government has stood up to multinational corporations before, so it is possible but it requires the right time, motivation and money. So government can do big things and they have influenced the communities attitudes around smoking. Australians are used to being told what to do and we are comfortable to have the government to create regulations for our health, like seatbelts or helmets.

We are starting the process of renewing the Food Policy and we are looking at the evaluation on what has happened over the last 5 years.

### **Interview with Katinka Day, Senior Food Policy and Campaigns Advisor at CHOICE**

**Katinka:** My name is Katinka Day and I am a senior policy and campaigns adviser at CHOICE looking after food and health issues. So CHOICE looks through the consumer lens, generally advocating for consumers to be able to make an informed decision, so a lot of our work revolves around advocating for better labels, making sure that there is definition around terminology allowing people to be able to make better decisions for their health.

**Sonya:** Could you elaborate on who is the Australian consumer? As in food culture?

**Melissa:** I can say what we found from our consumers when we ask them, what is important to them when they go shopping. The number one thing that people respond to is value, always price is there, but not only as the cheapest thing, but value for money. Quality is also really important and what comes really strongly is that people want to buy local and Australian products. So from our perspective that was really evident when we started campaigning for better "country of origin" labels,

we had 26000 people signing the campaign and as a result you can already see the new labels that are telling people where the food comes from.

Sonya: Yes there seems to be some confusion around labeling here. Especially when it comes to organic, people state the second biggest barrier to buying organic is trust. Why is that?

Katinka: Yes definitely there is a lot of confusion in the market I think we have 6 or 7 organic certifications and some brands are trying to use the word organic without having a certification. There was a case recently where a water company got fined because it was claiming to be organic and that is not even a thing. So for us 52% of people say that buying organic is important to them and that might be a reflection that the current labeling is confusing. I think it is really evident that people want to support local producers, buying products that are made or grown here, and previously the labels were failing to help them do this. So we are slowly starting to see a mistrust in labels due to the issues people have faced. Another area which consumers find confusing is health. So what products are healthier. The "health star" rating was recently introduced, that does help people. I think 35% people are buying products with higher stars, but it doesn't really work properly, as you can still get some junk food, labeled with high star rating, which is distorting the system and eroding people's trust. We get a sense that people want to buy better, like organic, ethically made or free range products, but the labeling is letting them down and that has implications for the entire food environment and people's trust.

Sonya: Has there been a promotional campaign by the state, on what is organic and what labels to look for?

Katinka: For organic it is promoted by the individual certification bodies, but I think because they are 6 of them, so it is confusing for people as they don't have the one consistent organic label. I think in terms of promotional marketing, it can be seen in the new local labeling campaign, the government invested a lot of money to educate consumers on how to use the new labels and that's seemed really effective. In contrast, the Health Star rating system didn't get the same amount of money to spend on marketing and there is a lot of confusion about how to use it and the lack of investment has put it at a disadvantage.

Sonya: FC definition.....What do you think is the state of FC in Australia?

Katinka: There is a growing proportion of Australians who want to have a positive impact on the food environment. A good example of that is free range eggs. Many people here want to buy them about 45%, to support animal welfare. But that's another label that fails consumers, because it recently allowed for higher stocking density and there is no requirement for chickens to go outside. I think there is a large demand to improve the food environment, there needs to be better transparency along the food supply chain, consumers want to understand if the products are sustainable, environmentally friendly, ethical. But it is just so difficult to be able to buy in line with your beliefs at the moment. There are some apps available to help people with that but even then you will only get a small proportion of people to use them. We see that a little more people are going to farmers markets and alternative retailers to have a bit more trust in what they are buying, but the reality is that the majority of people

shop at the major supermarkets. And those have a large amount of control here and they dictate a lot of what happens on the market. I think in a society where there is more competition between the supermarkets than some of them can go over and above in terms of providing additional information, but at the moment as it's only Coles and Woolworths and a bit ALDI, you don't see that level of additional info provided to consumers.

Sonya: So who do you think carries the responsibility over the food system- government, NGOs, citizens?

Katinka: It's definitely the government's role, but at the moment as it is, there is an understanding that consumers' values are not the first priority. From a food regulation perspective the first priority is food safety, second priority is health and third priority is consumer values. We know that the consumer values are the least valued issue and in a lot of cases the consumers lose out because there is more preference to food manufacturers or supermarkets. We try to influence governments to get a better outcome, but it really is needed that citizens become more involved and that's why we run campaigns on various issues to show that there is consumer detriment in the market, where people can not know information that they want to get. And we rely on that very heavily to be able to advocate for change on a particular issues.

Sonya: How do you think FC could be raised?

Katinka: It is about people not being ignorant to the problems. The more they are aware of the issues in the environments it gives them more stimulus to take action and be more involved. Because the food system relies on people asking for change. Organisations like CHOICE, or public Health organisations can only do so much. It is really important to be aware, but it is still quite a niche group of consumers that are.

Sonya: I found several reports showing that people don't seem to make the link between the food system and the environment. And that also seems to go on government level

Katinka: Yeah definitely the lack of transparency about where your food comes from, means that people are ignorant about the food system and the environment. An area where people are really aware is palm oil because there is a direct link between its production and environment. But that's because there has been an awareness campaign and organisations are working on that particular issue.

Sonya: What other barriers can there be to FC?

Katinka: In a sense one of the barriers is that people don't want to know, because there are already so many issues that they need to be aware of, that they kind of close themselves off to knowing more. If you look at a product you can think about the animal welfare, the wages, the environmental aspects and people just don't have that capacity to be worried about all of those things and then do something about it. People can be concerned more about some things over others and it's about having systems in place to harness the individuals who do want to create change. So it's about the people who only buy locally so they don't contribute to food miles, and making sure they have the information they

need to do that. Or the right organisations to connect to in order to get the information to do that. I think that's quite important.

Sonya: Can you think of other ways that people can exercise their citizenship?

Katinka: There are technologies to use to help make better purchasing decisions. CHOICE, for example, has a free range egg app to check which brands are genuinely free range. I think more and more innovative solutions will come on the market to help people make purchasing decisions that are aligned with their beliefs. In terms of other ways, there is the growing movement of people that are turning their backs on supermarkets, so there is growing interest in farmers' markets and community gardens. I think there is a lot of people that want to be more connected to their food, especially by growing their own produce and connect with their community like having food swaps. Again there is not so many people yet, but still it feeds into something bigger, allowing people to do that through information or support groups is quite useful.

Sonya: What do you think about the connection between food citizenship and health?

Katinka: I think that health is really closely linked with people's interaction with the food system. Health is an issue in Australia and we need tools to help us buy healthier food because we are faced by marketing with billions of dollar budget from food manufacturers to buy their unhealthy products. I think, with people becoming more involved with their food, be it socially, environmentally or otherwise there is an effect on health. If you are buying locally produced the products are more nutritious as there has been less transport time. So also when there is more of an awareness of the food system, there also will be awareness about the health aspects of the products and greater desire to see food as a way of feeding your body with nutrients.

Sonya: How do you think is the easiest way to influence the Australian consumer?

Katinka: traditionally the influence should come from government, especially when it comes to health, because they compose the Australian dietary guidelines, but people aren't aware of those. There is also the celebrity diet gurus and they are in competition with government for health promotion. So they need to do a better job to promote those, as the ADG are built on 55000 peer-reviewed research articles. So they are very important but are not hitting the mark on reaching people. Non-profit groups and corporations also influence people. Food manufacturers are often presented as the villains here, but they have such an important role in terms determining how people can buy, just by providing additional information or changing their own practices., providing transparency. So we are quite aware of that and often try and work directly with food manufacturers to get them to enact change as that has a very powerful effect with the food system.

Sonya: Through the information I have gathered I get the impression that Australians don't have a very high citizenship culture. Why do you think that is and how can it be changed?

Katinka: Interesting question. We don't have that strong culture like in Europe. Especially when it comes to food traditions and that makes a huge impact on what we eat, like you can see that in America as well. When you don't have the generations of food culture handed down to individuals and they have to rely on marketing and influences by the media and food manufacturers and it creates

mixed messages, contrasting food patterns and breeds distrust which then precludes people from being involved in the food system. So I definitely think there is a lack of food culture and I don't know to what extent that is balanced out by the fact that we are quite a multicultural country and a lot of those cultures bring their own traditions. But perhaps that's also why we are not all united in terms in what we believe in or what we value. I am not sure what are the implications of these issues.

Sonya: In some countries they have tried to introduce in school citizenship classes, teaching children on how the government works and how they can be proactive in the democratic process. Could this work here?

Katinka: Definitely education plays an important part. You have to then define food citizenship in a way that is easy to relate to the parents to get their support and education institutions. I know about the successful Stefanie Alexander school garden programs, who involve kids in growing and cooking produce at school. It has been really positive in engaging people in the food system. It is a voluntary program so it is not that wide spread, but I think it can play a very valuable role to help Australia to built its own food culture. And you have to start at that early age.

Sonya: It also seems that people here are very much driven by price, so it is difficult to adjust to paying the real fair price of food.

Katinka: With the supermarkets, especially with their own brands, people can buy them really cheap because they subsidize that with profits they make from other products. So it creates an unreasonable expectation of how much the product should cost that doesn't reflect the actual cost. So it's again the lack of transparency. The big thing from my perspective with projects involving citizenship, it is an opt-in system, so you are getting the more privileged individuals who are already very interested in those aspects of the food system involved. You are not reaching the disadvantaged or more vulnerable consumers and those are the people who need the be helped. For example, the Stephanie Alexander program is run only in schools in inner Sydney and those are more privileged areas.

Sonya: They have done some food security mapping in Melbourne and discovered some food deserts or areas where access to fresh produce is more difficult. Also not having a car can be a problem here

Katinka: Interestingly from a health perspective, fresh produce is perceived as more expensive, while processed foods are more convenient and often cheap. But there was interesting finding that a basket of healthy produce is cheaper than possessed. Obviously organic is more expensive, but conventional produce is not.

Sonya: Yes but still requires the time and skills to prepare the food...

Katinka: And that's where education comes into play, because if people are empowered on how to cook that doesn't become as big of barrier.

### **Interview with Melissa Lawson, Farm and Food Group Manager at CERES**

Sonya: How did CERES start up?

Melissa: CERES has been operating for over 30 years. In the late 70s the area was called the Brunswick Tip and what was here was flat desolate landscape with broken cars and fridges and not a

lot of natural vegetation. At that time there was a group of 12 individuals who were passionate about the environment and the local community and making a program to help people get employment. At the time a lot of local business were closing down, like textile business and that was creating unemployment and so they approached the local council and asked if they could use this land and we have had around 25 years lease for it. In the early days it was very much about creating jobs and educating people about sustainability, so the main thing CERES was about then were the community gardens and they are still here today.

Sonya: Did you receive any other support by the government over the years?

Melissa: In the early years there were different grants available, not necessarily from the government, some were from philanthropic foundations and as we have grown we have built our own social enterprises, so we are 95% self-sufficient in terms of income. But over the years we have had lots of different grants including from the state.

Sonya: Did you find any legislative barriers?

Melissa: So in the early days what would have driven it would have been done by people, like physically coming and cleaning up the site and then planting, done by around 150 volunteers driven by the passion to make a difference. I would say the early 80s there were a lot of programs that we couldn't have ran today, things change in terms of our relationship with the Council and the bureaucratic rules around food safety and insurance, which makes things a bit more complicated, so we were a little bit more fluid with our approach, there weren't as many rules when we started. But we can still deliver what we need and tick off on that as well.

Sonya: How many volunteers do you have today?

Melissa: We have a number of different ways to have volunteers to come to CERES. One of our larger volunteer programs is the propagation enterprise where we propagate our own seedlings, which are certified organic, and each week they will have up to 20 volunteers. We also have a Tamil Feast program which is a traditional dinner to support asylum seekers and it happens 3 nights a week and they would have upwards of 8 volunteers each night. Then we have our site gardeners who are 10 to 20 each week. And then we have our corporate volunteers who come to CERES and pay for a trainer to work with them???? So upwards of 40 volunteers a week and it changes depending on the season or if we have a festival or event.

Sonya: What kind of people do volunteering here?

Melissa: It is really varied, we have retired, or skilled person, helping with particular project or technology, or people that are out of the work-force and wanting to do something productive. We have all ages and background. Some people are travelling and passing through so they volunteer only for 3 months, other people have been volunteering for many years. It is a very diverse group.

Sonya: What about the customers. Who are they?

Melissa: Our customer has changed over the years. Like CERES, they are about 35 years old, there are a lot of families and they want their kids to engage with the natural environment. Again our customers are very diverse, some are gardeners, or people who want to buy good quality organic

food, but then we have other customers like the students who come to the workshops and courses. We have over 60000 school kids visiting per year. We have people who want to come and sit in a nice environment, or at the restaurant. Some people love our festivals. We have corporate groups that visit. We reach a lot of people in different ways.

Sonya: Yes you work on many different levels.

Melissa: We have different programs that inspire a lot of different people. One of our strengths is our diversity.

Sonya: Are there any plans to expand?

Melissa: We have this constant conversation about sustainable growth. It is a tricky question because we want to grow and reach more people but we are also limited, f.ex. by our physical location. The site is full and it is very active. In recent years we have put focus on our off-site enterprises, like Fair Food, which has been going for about 7 years and it is a home delivery service for local organic products. We also have our outreach school program that visits school and teach. So for an organisation this size and at this site is more about who we can go into other places and create influence there, either in schools or in another municipality and helping other non-profits. It is more about partnering and strengthening our current enterprises rather than becoming bigger.

Sonya: Do you think your model is reproducible in other places?

Melissa: We have lots of people contact us and ask us how to make their own CERES. I think that's a wonderful thing. Then they can take aspects of what we do and create something that better suits their local environment or their community. F.ex. we have been inspiration for city farming in Queensland or other community gardens. We definitely have people who want to know more about what we do so we offer consulting. It is easy to come and see how it is today and say that we want to have this, but this organisation has evolved and changed over 30 years. We couldn't have imagined where we will be today. A lot of it has come from the passion of the stuff and the community needs. It has grown organically. How do you replicate that? It is not easy, but I think the model, like a model that teaches and reaches and inspires is something that you can replicate elsewhere.

Sonya: Do you think it can be seen as a substitute of supermarkets in the future?

Melissa: I would like to think that CERES encourages people to think about not only how they buy food, but also how food is grown. We have a nursery where we sell seedlings and have gardening workshops. We encourage people to grow their own produce. I would like to think that what CERES highlights is the importance of the local economy and food system and how wonderful and inspiring small food community programs could be. Coz its sort of beyond food, like you walk into a supermarket and you can get whatever you like any time of year and that's not a reflection of what happens in the natural world. Often that experience is a disconnect, you walk in and you don't talk to the person who is serving you, whereas in CERES we hope people get more connection with the land and the food and a better understanding of what it takes for the farmer to produce that food. And then there is other things like volunteering and I would like to think it creates a pathway for people to discover more.

Sonya: What do you think are the characteristics of the typical Victorian consumer?

Melissa: For a lot of people it is about convenience as we are very busy as a society, and I think that is why our online enterprise has worked because we have tapped into something that people need. But also on the flip side, particularly in Melbourne we have quite a food savvy culture, full of restaurants and cafes and really rich multi-cultural community and I think people have love for good food. There is a growing interest of where food comes from. There are these tv shows, like Masterchef, where people want to learn how to bake their own bread. So I feel we have both, people that are very busy and people that want to learn more the food and where it comes from.

Sonya: How about their social and community connections?

Melissa: I think places like CERES brings people together. Everything in our society is so fast that we forget to stop and say hi to your neighbor. I think CERES is a place where you can pause for a minute and think about what your impact is on the world and your relationships with people. We create lots of ways of people to come together, either through volunteering or workshops, community programs. Like our Urban Orchards Program, where gardeners can come and swap their excess produce. People crave that connection. In my grandmother's generation it was a community, who raised children together and shared things. I think we have disconnected over the years, from each other and from our natural environment and food and I think we are slowly swinging back towards reconnecting.

Sonya: The definition of FC..... I think CERES is ticking all the boxes. Do you think that's true?

Melissa: It is quite an intellectual statement. What we do is we provide a practical demonstration. We might tick all the boxes there, but our attraction is more about subtlety, like if someone comes into the market and sees a sign explaining that the lemons are from Joe's' garden 5 miles away. So it is subtle. The strength of CERES is that all of the sight shows practical demonstration of something, whether it is green technology, solar panels, composting system, or farm. We are doing it, we are showing it and it's alive and it's real. That subtlety then inspires people to go and try it or talk about it.

Sonya: Who do you think carries more responsibility over how the food system is? The government, the people, organisations like CERES?

Melissa: I think it's everyone's responsibility, we are all caretakers, we all eat. Every time you buy something, you make a choice and that choice has an impact and it's understanding that impact.

Sonya: In a way a lot of our choices come from convenience, so hasn't people gotten used to the government and supermarkets handling the responsibility?

Melissa: You vote with your shopping dollar. The big supermarkets take notice, there is a reason they have more organic things and have dressed up their stuff to look like farmers. The responsibility is on all of us, but there is power in community, the passion of grassroots pushes upwards. And that's something governments can see. And we see it with our local councils as they talk about food strategy and food security and that wasn't part of the conversation 10 years ago.

Sonya: What do you think is the level of FC in the average consumer?

Melissa: I am biased, for everyone here is high, but that's in the context of CERES. It is hard for me to comment on. For some people if the price is right it makes the choice easier, I know for some people it is not in the upfront, if it's local or seasonal.. I like to think that it is changing. Most cafes around Melbourne have some aspect of the sustainable food option, like fairtrade coffee, or free-range eggs.

Sonya: The organic report claims that households allocate less than 5% of their expenditure to organic. When they talk about the barriers, the top barrier is price, but that is followed by trust. Why do you think that is?

Melissa: That's interesting. We are certified organic with the national label. We follow their practices and they audit us. Not all the produce we sell is certified, some of our farmers grow without chemicals and we trust their practices. It is funny that there is mistrust, for me the mistrust is the other way. I mistrust products that are not labeled. For some of it, it is early days. For example free-range, it is not where it should be with regulation and some companies can use the labeling it for their advantage. You could call something natural organic and it is not necessarily the case. But people need to know what to look for, flip it over, look for a certifying body. If you are informed you can see through the misuse of words. It's just about being empowered.

Sonya: Also the awareness of the impact of the food system on the environment is not very high. Why do you think that is?

Melissa: For me personally it is because we are disconnected from our food. Years ago we had a relationship with our food and farmers. We have moved away from our rural centers. We had the 50s which was all about convenient and modern. I think we just moved too far away from it and if you are not connected to it you don't understand it and it's impacts. The green revolution and the use of chemicals. There are so many concerns around our food systems and maybe for some people they haven't thought what's beyond their plate. You can unravel that quite easily. We do it with young kids coming to CERES, and it still surprises me when we ask them where food comes from and they say the supermarket. Then if we can educate them they can go home and influence their families.

Sonya: There are least 52% growing some of their food at home. Do you think it's a good number?

Melissa: It is a good number. They are growing food and that inevitably leads to sharing, you have a load of zucchinis and then you share it with your friends or neighbours, people see your garden, you are influencing your family and friends. Hopefully you are not using chemicals in your own backyard and you are getting good healthy option. I think that number is exciting. It could be higher, but is exciting. You don't even have to have space for it, you can join the community garden or volunteer at CERES. If we are all urban farmers, how wonderful would that be.

Sonya: The majority of the non-gardeners state lack of space as a barrier, but only 11% of them actually lack the space. On the other hand only 14% state lack of knowledge, but a lot of them fail at it. Why do you think that is?

Melissa: Many years ago when I started gardening, I was given advice, by my friend who is landscape architect:"Just put it in, watch it, see what happens and learn from it". I think any good gardener knows some things will work and some will not. It is alive and is real and it is going to change. I

encourage to talk to other people who garden. Just get into the dirt and plant what you want to eat. And get your kids involved. Somethings are out of your control as a gardener, like the weather. But there is the wonder of watching it take shape....

Sonya: The top 5 of the benefits stated by the gardeners were centered around themselves, like taste and health, but none of them mentioned environmental impact

Melissa: I imagine for some people gardening is enjoyment and they haven't thought about the environmental impact as a plus. But the people we see coming through CERES, some have a bigger understanding about their footprint and that's why they garden, so some garden purely because they want to make a difference with their food choices. Other people come for pure enjoyment, but they still have the same impact.

Sonya: Yes that's true, but I wonder why it seems that people don't connect the dots between environment and food, which is part of the FC.

Melissa: For me the first step is getting people in the garden planting, then it will unravel, because you have to think about your inputs, like water, composting, natural pesticides. It must get you to ask questions about your take on it. But obviously that link needs to be higher and people need to think about the big picture.

Sonya: In general how do you think is the level of FC of the average Victorian? And not only FC but citizenship, do people participate in political issues, associations?

Melissa: I am maybe not the person to answer that as I am surrounded by it here at CERES. I see it from little to bigger changes. We are constantly asking the question here, how can we reach more people, how can we make a change? It is really high in CERES, both staff, volunteers and customers. And even if it is small with the customers, that's a start, as just seeing the site it sparks a lot of questions.

Sonya: How about the quite high level of overweight and obese. Do you think this is connected to the FC?

Melissa: I would say that they are connected. There is reliance on the convenience and with that it is easy to over consume. Not understanding the energy that goes into producing good quality food as opposed to fast food, is a part of that. If you understood the whole food story of all the people down the line that it took to get those tomatoes on your plate, you might have more respect and make better choices.

Sonya: What barriers do you perceive for FC in Australia?

Melissa: I think education, family values. Coz some people do it without the academic approach, but because it is traditional to have a garden. I think if we had more education in schools around environment, food systems that would be where change will happen. Then you are building up the value of it.

Sonya: Why do you think it is not more in the school system?

Melissa: It is changing. There is the Stephanie Alexander School Garden Program, a lot of schools have their own little kitchen gardens. I think the schools see the importance of it, because there are

many lessons in that, it is not just I grew a tomato, but you can tie English and math to it for example. Maybe it is a funding issue, as for some schools can't handle that. So it comes back to our governments and where they put the emphasis.

Sonya: Can you think of some other ways people can practice their citizenship apart from gardening and buying organic?

Melissa: You can get involved with local council, ask the questions about what is the food security plan, support other grassroots organisations, support community gardens and NGOs. Like FSA, trying to make policy change. Get active in your own community, it just starts with one person, like giving a gift of seedlings. Talk to your kids about it. Get informed and shop smart. I think the shopping is the big one for me, because that's where you impact the big corporations and they need to make adjustments.

Sonya: I can see that the access to organic for example, might not be so easy in all areas in the big supermarkets.

Melissa: It is funny because in the local supermarkets around CERES have a good organic section and it has grown over the years and now the supermarkets even have their own brand of organic. But it is different in other areas. You also have the local markets that even if they are not selling labeled organic, it might be still sustainably produced.

Sonya: In Denmark for example, it seems that the environmental impact of the food system is much more on the political and individual agenda and I wonder why it is different here. Maybe because of space?

Melissa: Yeah I often read about inspiring policy changes in Europe and I wonder if it is lack of actual agricultural land that is pushing that. We are a big country and we have loads of space. Maybe if you are smaller country you are forced to talk about it. Another thing is that we have very strong American influence on our culture, in terms of movies, tv and food.

But also we are seeing things on TV about farming, or Jamie Olivers of the world and we will be pushed to have those conversations. As the city here is growing we are eating into our foodbowl, building housing on top of agricultural land.

Sonya: During my interview with one of the Melbourne's Food policy makers, he said that the link between food system and environment is problematic also on governmental level, as it isn't addressed by the environmental department.

Melissa: We have to talk not just of the environmental impact of producing food but also about food security, where are we going to grow the food in 30 years time? Those need to be discussed hand in hand.

### **Interview with Jane, political activist and organizer of the “Neighbourhood Growers”**

Sonya: You are one of the organisers of the Gnomes. How did you start?

Jane: Initially I was just a business consultant and I wasn't very interested in gardening.

We did a callout on Facebook and emails in permaculture type groups, looking for people willing to volunteer their yards for a share of the food or people who want to garden.

Sonya: Is it important to garden together as a community?

Jane: The industrial food system is about to fall hard, so we can't rely on that system for our food and it is totally unsustainable and not something I want to put money towards. Then there is the community aspect of it, again the capitalist system is both falling apart and is extremely undesirable and I would much prefer to be involved with people that I know and care about and that we do the things we need to do together in a non-hierarchical way, have fun and produce what we need. It's lovely. The numbers go up and down, sometimes we are just 2-3 but often it is 15 and it always feels utopian with kids running around. It's beautiful to be part of it. We harvest and cook a big dinner and then share the leftovers. That's how I would want to live my life. I suppose there is also the health stuff, but for me it's just mostly personal preference.

Sonya: Do you do something else social with the "Neighbourhood Growers" apart from the gardening?

Jane: We do the weekly gardening and dinner and then once a month we do a gardening day and lunch. Otherwise not really we just get together to garden. We also have meeting once a month for this particular garden. "Neighbourhood Growers" has an organising meeting every 2-3 months, to find more gardens and make sure the ones we have thrive. There is one Coburg, West, And this one in Preston. We have made a starter pack for people that want to start their own "Neighbourhood Growers" site in their area. There is instructions how to do a callout for land and gardeners and there is also a template agreement between the owner of the garden and the gardeners and few other things about how to garden. We are about to do a big callout on facebook for more people that want to start new gardens. It is pretty simple.

Sonya: Have you brought someone from your friends circle and family into the "Neighbourhood Growers" or are the majority from FB?

Jane: Yes definitely one is my sister and yeah definitely the majority is not from Facebook, that's where we mostly advertise for a new garden. We find a lot of people from events, I do a lot of political speaking so I am meeting people all the time and whenever I tell them about it, they are interested. This project is one of the most successful that people want to get involved in. Almost everyone that I mention it to, thinks it is awesome and I am constantly getting people's phone numbers. Ofc a lot of them never actually come, but a lot of them do.

Sonya: Some research shows that people have an interest in gardening but it seems they don't make the connection between food system and environment. Why do you think that is?

Jane: I don't think people are very knowledgeable in general in political things. I think gardening has become trendy, like there is a back-to-the-old-days movement, particularly with permaculture and knitting and so on.

I do a lot of different political work and it started to feel like this garden is taking over my life, it felt like in order to do this garden well it really requires a lot of energy a lot of effort and treating it like a project. We have never managed to do it as well as we would like, although there is a lot of things that

we are proud of, like the compost and fruit trees and the veggie beds, but it is never managed to its full capacity.

I used to think that everybody should grow their own food, but now I don't think so anymore because in order to be good at it, it requires quite a bit of knowledge and time and a lot of dedication. Everybody can grow their herbs and grains, but only about 1 in 5 can be a farmer even if it is in backyards. It needs to be treated like a job for it to work. I sometimes feel like this gardening will never work, but other times I feel like we have become much better at organising ourselves and maybe it will work out.

Sonya: So do you mean that maybe not everybody should grow their own food, but in community?

Jane: Yeah definitely, that makes the most sense.

Sonya: Do you think the City council is helping people to start growing their food?

Jane: I don't know I am not very interested in what the government is doing. They are not too bad. The verge gardening rules are getting better. I don't know the rules if you are allowed to sell the food that you grow, but I'm pretty sure it is possible.

Sonya: Because I was told they allow people to garden in streets alleys and public areas

Jane: Yeah definitely, but we decided to avoid those, because of the bureaucracy. Apart from the streets, which is quite good and we focused also on yards, because it is easier to make an agreement with whoever owns the land.

Sonya: On another subject, do you think that gardening improved your eating habits or the people around you?

Jane: Yes, definitely what I am eating is fresher. But I always ate quite healthy. Especially the herbs, they are very nutritious.

Sonya: Do you still buy food from the supermarket?

Jane: Yes, but we mostly buy from Terra Madre (Health Food Store), depending on the time of year and harvest. The first year we bought hardly any food at all, but it goes up and down.

Sonya: Do you try to buy organic or locally produced?

Jane: Yes both.

Sonya: Do you think that average people would have similar development after they start gardening?

Jane: Definitely, even more so than me, because I was already eating quite well, but when you start growing food you have all those fresh veggies that need to be eaten. There are quite many benefits to gardening. Just recently read about this study that even just putting your hands in the dirt increases your serotonin levels. Obviously there is the exercise and being outdoors in the sun.

Sonya: Do you think if showing people how food is grown it changes how they treat it?

Jane: Yes totally. It is pretty awesome watching food grow.

Sonya: Do you think they start to respect it more and waste less?

Jane: Yes definitely when you know how much work goes into growing it. Although sometimes it can be difficult when you grow so much food and don't have enough time to eat and preserve it and then

you have to throw it out. So sometimes you can end up with too much food, which is the same as dumpster-diving.

Sonya: What do you think can be done to encourage more people to garden apart from what you are doing already?

Jane: I think "Neighbourhood Growers" is important, largely because it is fun to do it with people, especially for me as I don't enjoy gardening that much and it can be a lot more stressful to do it alone. Also it is a really good way to learn, because there is a lot to figure out. One of my old projects was about raising awareness about the financial, energy, environmental crisis and all of the reasons of why this system is not going to work forever. All the obvious stuff of teaching how to garden, promoting gardening, if food was more expensive as in the actual cost of food, where we don't rip off farmers. That's not gonna happen as long as we are in this system.

Sonya: It seems organic is not very popular here, why do you think that is? Apart from price?

Jane: Well it is mostly price, if it was cheaper people will buy it more. People do not want it hard enough.

Sonya: Can you think of ways to raise the participation of people to demand sustainable food?

Jane: Australians are not very political and there is no awareness that we can change things.

Sonya: I have been told that the Australians are quite fine with being told what to do, for example with the anti-smoking campaign, where the price has been increased so much and it was accepted.

Jane: Yeah they felt they don't have a choice, as they don't know how to run campaigns and don't have the energy. Particularly after all the years of health campaigns, when they raised the prices and banned it in public places and the ones that were still smoking were with lower socioeconomic status and education, so they wouldn't be able to do much against it. But we don't have that history of rioting and we are too trusting of the government. The political work I do is to inform people that there alternatives to the current system and we are trying to promote alternatives. We are drawing attention of how bad the system is.

## APPENDIX II *Food City: City of Melbourne Food Policy Report One*

# Food City: City of Melbourne food policy

**Report One: 1 July 2012 – 30 June 2016**



**CITY OF MELBOURNE**

# FOOD CITY

CITY OF MELBOURNE FOOD POLICY

Endorsed by  
Future Melbourne Committee  
5 June 2016

## Vision

A food system that is secure,  
healthy, sustainable, thriving  
and socially inclusive.

## Aim

The aim of the food policy is to improve people's health and wellbeing by promoting a food system that is secure, healthy, sustainable, thriving and socially inclusive through education & community development, leadership & advocacy, partnerships, regulation & infrastructure management and research.

# Snapshot

Drawing on the results of the community consultation and research base, five key themes were identified:

THEME 1- A strong, food secure community

THEME 2- Healthy food choices for all

THEME 3 - A sustainable and resilient food system

THEME 4 – A thriving local food economy

THEME 5 - A city that celebrates food



**55** worm farms by 2016  
= over 1,000,000 worms



Our Community  
Food Guide lists  
**119**  
community food  
programs



**296**  
**ACTIONS**  
since June 2012

From 296 actions, 236 have reached completion or **80%**



**Healthy Eating  
Caterers**  
introduced  
Moomba 2016

**2** COUNCIL  
BEEHIVES



↻ **50 kg honey**

Produced in 2014 and 2015  
26kg donated to local food relief  
programs

# THEME 1- A strong, food secure community

## OUR AMBITIONS ARE TO:

- > Increase access to nutritious, safe, fair and culturally appropriate food for all people in the municipality – this requires a focus on those who are most vulnerable.
- > Build knowledge and skills for food provision within the community.
- > Encourage broad community participation in decisions and activities that shape the city's food system.

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
20 actions	21 actions	27 actions	25 actions
16 complete	20 complete	24 complete	18 complete
0 ongoing	0 ongoing	1 ongoing	7 ongoing
4 discontinued	1 discontinued	2 discontinued	0 discontinued



The proportion of people who ran out of food and couldn't afford to buy more has remained fairly constant:

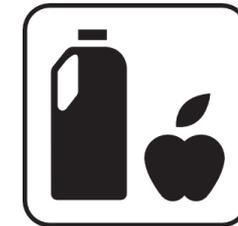
- 4.5% in 2012
- 2.8% in 2013
- 3.3% in 2014
- 2.8% in 2015

The City of Melbourne conducts an annual Social Indicators Survey which surveys 400 local residents. For four years we have included a range of questions related to food insecurity.

## Key Highlights



The City of Melbourne bought the Jamie's Ministry of Food Mobile Kitchen to Princes Park, Carlton North from 13 July to 20 September 2015. The City of Melbourne worked in conjunction with The Good Foundation to deliver the community cooking program which equipped people with the knowledge and skills to prepare simple healthy meals using fresh ingredients. The program was initially promoted to local community organisations to target participants who are most at risk of chronic disease; disadvantaged and vulnerable groups include single parents, the unemployed, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders people with a disability and young persons. Two, five week cooking programs were offered, each running for 90 minutes and 598 participants attended the program.



➔ We can now track trends associated with food insecurity in the municipality including adults worrying about food scarcity, adopting coping strategies and going hungry.

## Future directions

Build Knowledge and skills for food provision within the community

## Challenges

9% of the adult population of the municipality experience food insecurity and food-related stress

## Things to celebrate

A Community Food Guide was created in 2014, to provide a resource for community agencies and people in the community about accessing affordable, fresh and healthy food available from food parcels, vouchers, food swaps, community kitchens and gardens within our municipality and surrounding suburbs . It was distributed to local agencies and is available on City of Melbourne's Open Data platform

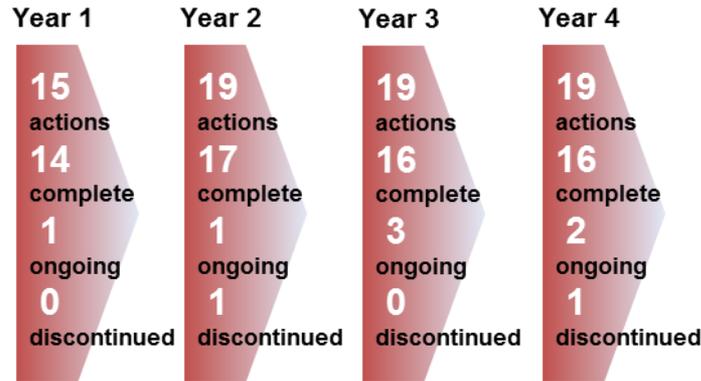
## THEME 2- Healthy food choices for all

### OUR AMBITIONS ARE TO:

- > Improve and promote the availability of nutritious food options in the municipality.
- > Raise awareness about what is involved in a healthy, nutritious diet.
- > Ensure the provision of safe food by regulation.

### Future directions

Raise awareness about what is involved in a healthy, nutritious diet.



# 3748\*

food businesses are registered in City of Melbourne. All are subject to an annual food safety inspection \*approx.

City of Melbourne conducts an annual Council Plan Intercept Survey of city users, to collect a range of social indicators for Melbourne City Council's Council Plan.

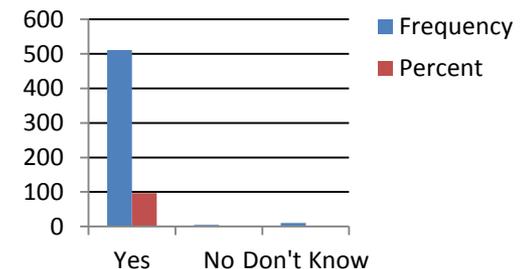
In 2015 the survey randomly sampled over 500 city users. The results show a high level of trust in the safety of food on offer in the municipality.

## Key Highlights



In 2011/12, participants identified, via the 'Moomba Experience' survey, that healthy food options are limited at Moomba. In response to this in 2013, a designated Healthy Eating Zone was initiated. The Healthy Eating Zone included caterers whose menus had been assessed and coded according to the Healthy Choices food and drink classification guide and branded as 'Healthy Eating Zone' caterers. In 2014, sugar sweetened beverages were excluded from sale in the zone. In 2016 Healthy Eating Caterers were integrated into the main run of caterers on a random placement basis with all red items prohibited. For the first time, the Events Branch and the Health Projects Team collaborated on all areas of planning and operations for the healthy eating caterers. The same process and criteria is now being applied to a number of City of Melbourne Premier events.

### Food Safety Is food in the municipality safe to eat?



### Challenges

Visibility of healthy food at Moomba and other events. **Moomba 2016:**

- 36% aware of the Healthy Food Caterers
- 64% not aware or aware but did not see

### How satisfied are you with the availability of healthy food options at Moomba?

2013 n/a 2014 **67%** 2015 **76%** 2016 **46%**  
Very satisfied or satisfied

### Things to celebrate

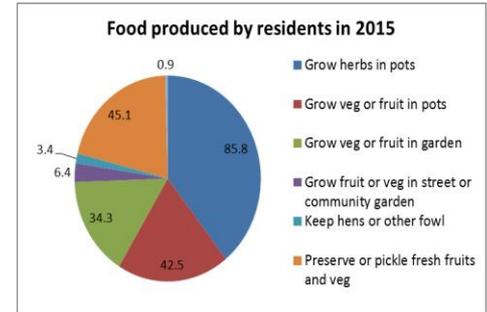
The updated **2015 Catering Suppliers Resource Guide** assists staff with catering choices. Caterers meet nutritional, sustainable, social enterprise, cultural and cost criteria.

# THEME 3 - A sustainable and resilient food system

## OUR AMBITIONS ARE TO:

- > Encourage environmentally sustainable food practices.
- > Increase food production within the municipality.
- > Reduce food waste through encouraging redistribution of food and recycling of organic waste and water.

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
13 actions	19 actions	17 actions	20 actions
9 complete	13 complete	14 complete	15 complete
3 ongoing	5 ongoing	2 ongoing	4 ongoing
1 discontinued	1 discontinued	1 discontinued	1 discontinued



In 2015 the City of Melbourne annual Social Indicators Survey included questions about food growing, revealing that **58.3%** of people reported they produce their own food. This includes all aspects of production from entry-level herb growing in pots to larger garden projects and keeping chickens and preserving leftovers and making jam. All of these activities contribute to the resilience of the population.



## Key Highlights

In February 2016, for the third year in a row to coincide with the Sustainable Living Festival, the Melbourne Town Hall flower crates were planted with herbs, vegetables and edible flowers to create a demonstration Veggie Patch. The 'Grow Show' programming was added to engage people in the patch and provide information on gardening. Information sessions were provided by the Project Manager from SERCO.



In 2016 a second Veggie Patch in a vertical garden format was installed at Gordon Reserve outside Parliament Station which attracted a lot of interest from passer-by's and office workers.



**63%** of residents who produce their own food, eat it **1 - 3** days a week.

## Things to celebrate

**55** worm farms initiated by City of Melbourne diverting over **26 tonnes** of food waste from landfill each year. **350** tonnes of recyclables and food waste diverted from landfill in one year at Degraeves St.

## Future directions

Reduce food waste through encouraging redistribution of food and recycling of organic waste and water

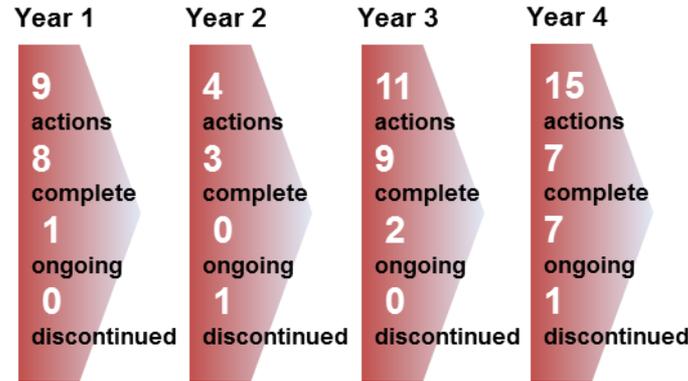
## Challenges

Helping residents to become more resilient by finding ways to increase and encourage urban agriculture.

# THEME 4 – A thriving local food economy

## OUR AMBITIONS ARE TO:

- > Promote a vibrant and diverse food sector that extends Melbourne's reputation as a world class 'city of food'.
- > Increase the opportunities for city residents and visitors to purchase local and regionally-produced food.
- > Investigate innovative food system solutions.

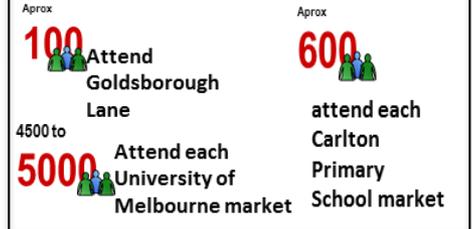


The City of Melbourne is home to three VFMA accredited farmers markets - providing opportunities for regional Victoria and urban communities to connect. Farmers Markets make locally and regionally grown food easily accessible.

## Key Highlights



The **Local Food Launchpad 2015 (LFLP15)** program was a facilitated workshop series designed to guide and inform a self-nominated group to develop and refine their ideas to improve the local food system. This was an opportunity for City of Melbourne to partner with Doing Something Good, the Food Alliance and Open Food Network to develop participants' capacity to progress and expand their concepts. In **2016** the LFLP is expanding enabling us the opportunity to work directly with even more of the local food sector to support and assist them to effect food system change



**City of Melbourne signed the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact, joining 122 other international cities in working to develop sustainable food,**



## Things to celebrate

A successful Gourmet Food Truck Trial leading to a formal Food Van policy to ensure the City of Melbourne welcomes and supports food truck operators.

## Future directions

Promote a vibrant and diverse food sector

## Challenges

Understanding the amount of locally/regionally produced food being consumed in the municipality

# THEME 5 - A city that celebrates food

## OUR AMBITIONS ARE TO:

- > Promote the diversity and quality of the municipality's food cultures.
- > Encourage shared celebrations of food that bring people together, strengthen social inclusion and build connected communities.
- > Celebrate stories of food that reconnect us to its source and the natural world.

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
9 actions	4 actions	4 actions	5 actions
8 complete	3 complete	2 complete	4 complete
1 ongoing	0 ongoing	0 ongoing	1 ongoing
0 discontinued	1 discontinued	2 discontinued	0 discontinued

The 'Living Healthier and Wealthier' workshop series at the Multicultural Hub in 2015/16 attracted 132 participants aged between 20 and 60 years from Australia, India, Brazil, China, Taiwan, Singapore, Italy, Cambodia, Zambia and Mexico.



## Key Highlights

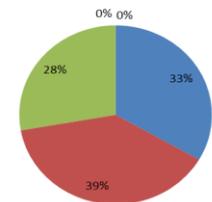


The City of Melbourne supported two Community Kitchen programs that aim to share the celebration of food, bring people together, strengthen social inclusion and build connected communities. The first pilot was conducted at the Sth Yarra Senior Citizens Centre between January and March 2016. The second was conducted at the Kathleen Syme Community and Library Centre between March and May 2016. The City of Melbourne is supporting another series of facilitated sessions from June to August 2016 at Kathleen Syme in addition to the development of a Community Kitchen Guidelines and Toolkit for use by the groups that use the facility.

## Making social connections through food – Living Healthier and Wealthier Veggie Patch workshop survey results

### Opportunity to meet new people

Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree



## Future directions

Encourage shared celebrations of food that strengthen social connections

## Challenges

Identifying City of Melbourne venues suitable for food-related group activities

## Things to celebrate

In 2015-16, 40 organisations received a \$4 subsidy to provide 30,295 community meals to older people. 32 of the organisations provided culturally specific meals.

# Background details

## Council Plan 2013-17

A bold, inspirational and sustainable city

### Goal 1 A city for people

Outcome 1.2

People who are informed and supported to be healthy

### Goal 5 An eco city

Outcome 5.5

Climate change impacts on the municipality are managed

## Councillor Priorities

1.2.4 Support the community to access nutritious and sustainable food through our food policy

## Year One Actions

Implement the food policy  
Support urban food production and encourage the purchase of local food

## Year Two Action

Build knowledge and skills to improve food security for all people in the municipality, as part of our food policy implementation.

## Year Three Action

Initiate and support food-related activities that strengthen social connections and access to nutritious, sustainable food.

Annual Report: [2013-14](#) [2014-15](#)

## Highlights:

### City of Melbourne collaborations:

- Love Your Laneway – Stevenson Lane and Sniders Lane
- Local Food Production Working Group
- 100 Ways to Move it Melbourne
- [Town Hall Veggie Patch](#)

### Sector Partnerships:

- Doing Something Good – [EcoCity Food Forum](#), [Going Local Forum](#), [Big Ideas Jam](#), [Local Food Launchpad](#)
- Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance – [Fair Food Week](#), [Fair Food](#) documentary
- Food Alliance [Sustain] – [Know Your Foodbowl](#)
- City of Milan [plus 40 cities] - [Milan Urban Food Policy Pact](#)
- Vic Eco Innovation Lab [Veil] - [Foodprint](#)

### Research:

- City of Melbourne food audit
- [Mapping Municipal Food Supply and Access in the City of Melbourne](#)
- [City of Melbourne Kitchen audit](#)
- [Catering Suppliers Resource Guide](#)
- [Community Food Program Project Report](#)
- [Fresh Food Local Retail audit](#)

## Links:

- [Food City: City of Melbourne Food Policy](#)
- [Food Policy Action Plan Master Document](#)
- [Food Policy Discussion Paper](#)
- [Food Policy infographic](#)
- [Corporate website page](#)

