



**Health Coalition**  
Aotearoa

# He kai kei aku ringa

The food is in my hands

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**Foundation Report – January 2026**



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# 1. Executive Summary

## 1.1 Introduction

This is the system analysis “Understanding Food Systems in South Auckland” conducted by a consortium comprising:



Initial funding for the research was provided by Clare Foundation, JR McKenzie Trust, Healthy Families South Auckland, The University of Auckland School of Population Health Pacific Health, MAS Foundation and Health Coalition Aotearoa.

This document is intended to inform the project team, guide funding and action plans, and be available for interested others more widely. Using information obtained from interviews with members of the community, and other stakeholders, community workshops and the literature, we use a system analysis to map the underlying mechanisms that connect food systems and the causes and effects of food insecurity. This study focuses on connecting the various areas of knowledge into a shared understanding, to facilitate an integrated, community-grounded approach.

By combining knowledge from various sources in a model, we create a shared picture of the actual and potential effects of the food system, along with potential intervention points. The resulting model provides visual insight into the interrelationships between the effects of the food system across the community, rather than treating each one in isolation.

Where possible, these food system effects are illustrated using quotes from members of the Māngere community and publicly available data.



**Community Engagement:** Interviews and workshops with members of the Māngere community and staff in Auckland Council responsible for policy development related to food systems.



**Literature Search:** A search of the literature to explore the effects of the current food system on food security.



**Data:** Illustration of effects using quotes from community members and publicly available data.



**System Maps:** Developing system maps to visually capture and analyse the interrelationships between the themes and focus on actions within them.



**Interventions:** Identification and mapping of policy levers and community-level interventions.

## 1.2 Document Purpose

The prime purpose of this Foundation Report is to provide a repository of our understanding, that can be used to develop communications and actions in collaboration with the South Auckland community. It is a detailed document that brings together what we have learnt from the community through interviews and workshops and enhanced by the literature. The literature was used primarily to broaden and deepen our understand of issues and ideas raised by community members.

It is intended that the document is used by the project team rather than given wide distribution. It provides the database from which reports and other documents can be put together for different audiences. It also provides the database and tools for ongoing collaborative work with the community to develop community actions and policy recommendations.

**Food security** exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

**Food sovereignty** is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, emphasising local control over food systems.

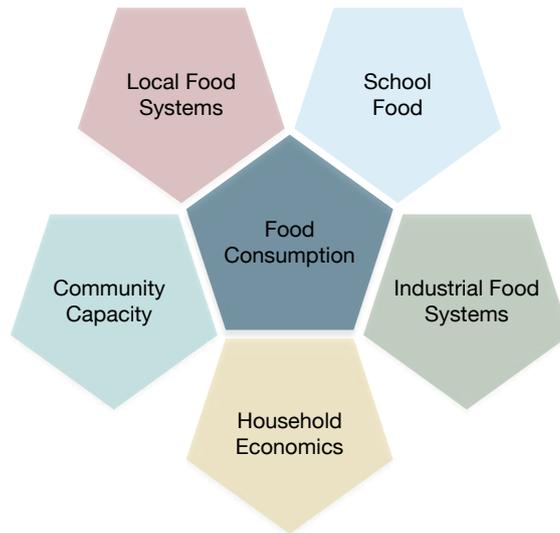
### 1.3 Overview

Based on the outcomes of interviews with key people in the Māngere community, group workshops and a literature review, the effects of the current food system on food security have been clustered into six themes and further elaborated in the model. These themes are: *local food systems, community capacity, household economics, industrial food systems, school food*, all of which interact to affect the food that people eat (*food consumption*). Both within and between each theme, there are connections that create the current crisis in food security.

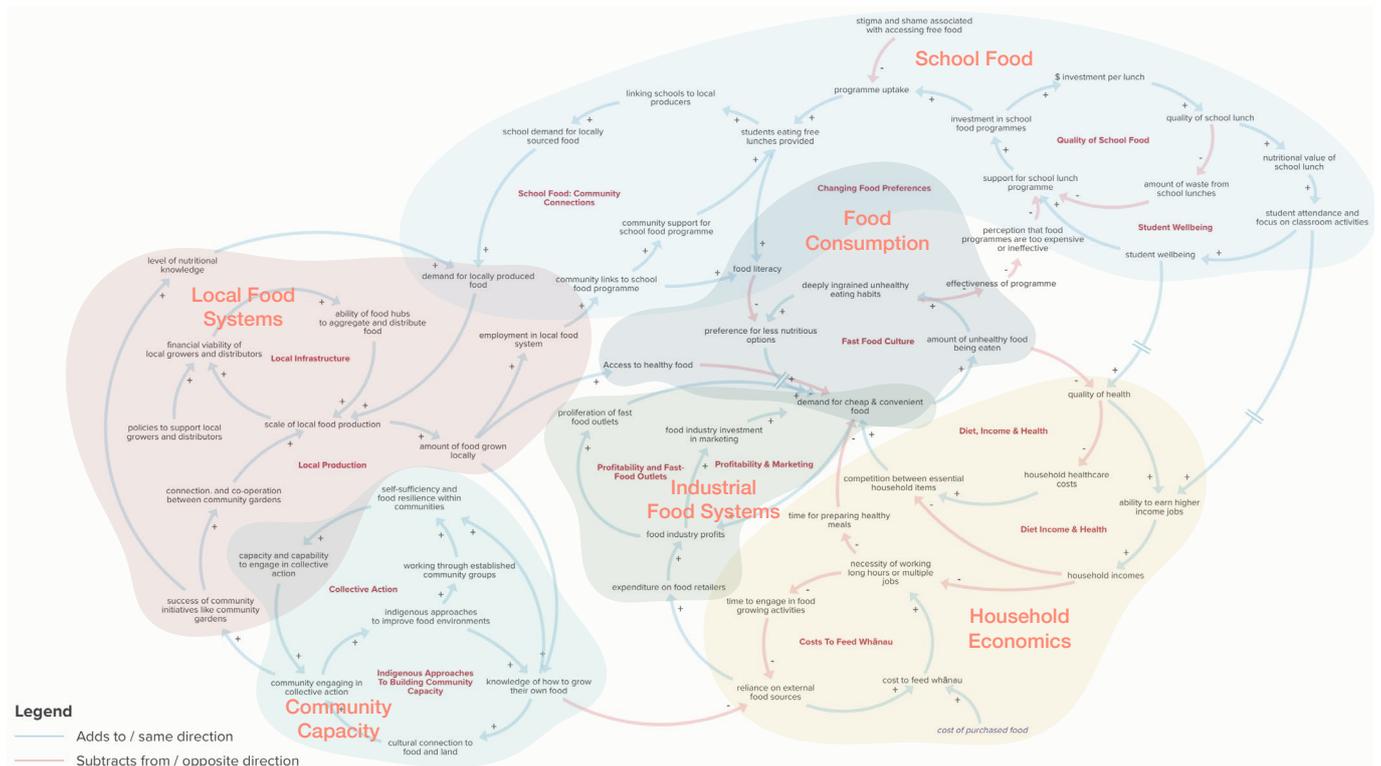
Focus areas are central points within a theme where actions are being targeted. For each focus area, observed and potential effects are discussed based on the group meetings and the in-depth literature review.

The system map provides a structured way to map these connections, locate interventions in the overall system and facilitate further analysis. The system map is complex, and will be broken down and discussed in sections throughout this report. The appendix provides a detailed explanation of how to read the system maps used in this report and how to use them to develop community actions and policy recommendations.

### Themes



### System Map



**Legend**  
 — Adds to / same direction  
 — Subtracts from / opposite direction

## 1.4 Themes



**Local food systems:** Food production and distribution can significantly enhance food security and well-being by providing accessible, affordable, and culturally appropriate food, while fostering community resilience and health. Local food systems which have a social purpose, such as community gardens, urban farming, food rescue, food banks, social supermarkets and food hubs can provide viable alternatives to the industrial food system.



**Industrial food systems:** Mainstream, industrial food systems only cater to people who can afford the food offered for sale. As such, the high cost of healthy food and the saturated availability of cheaper, unhealthy food significantly impact food security and the well-being of communities in South Auckland. This challenge stems from various causes rooted in market structures, supply dynamics, and economic barriers.



**Community capacity:** Local and indigenous approaches to building community capacity are an important part of enhancing food security, and promoting holistic well-being. These approaches are rooted in a deep, interconnected understanding of land, people, and traditional practices, fostering self-reliance and resilience within communities. They build the skills, knowledge, expertise, networks and resources for thriving local food systems.



**School food programmes:** The free, healthy school lunches programme, Ka Ora, Ka Ako, is important for addressing challenges related to food security, nutritional health, school engagement and environmental sustainability. Successful school food programmes and policies take a holistic, systems-based, culturally grounded approach, that brings together schools, and communities.



**Household economics:** The resources available to households profoundly shape food security and overall well-being, by directly influencing access to nutritious food and daily lifestyle choices. A significant barrier is the high cost of healthy food, which frequently forces families to opt for cheaper, less nutritious alternatives.



**Food consumption:** What food people consume is not simply a matter of individual factors but is affected by a wide range of factors, identified in the system map, and highlighted in the five themes.

## 1.5 Summary Findings

This report presents a system analysis of the food system in South Auckland, focusing on Māngere, to understand interconnected causes and consequences so that a fairer, healthier and more resilient food system can better cater to the food and nutrition needs of the community. Using a community-led approach that combines interviews with community leaders, workshops, a literature review, and system mapping, the study identifies six key themes that interact to shape food and nutrition outcomes: local food systems, community capacity, household economics, industrial food systems, school food, and their cumulative effect on food consumption.

The analysis reveals that what people eat is not simply a matter of individual choice but is profoundly shaped by a complex system. The most predominant factor is household economics, where the high cost of healthy food combined with low incomes and high living expenses forces families to choose cheaper, less nutritious, and highly processed alternatives. Time scarcity, driven by the need to work long hours, further reinforces a reliance on convenient fast food.

This situation is exacerbated by the dominant industrial food system, which prioritises profit over community health. This system is characterised by a supermarket duopoly that controls prices, a saturation of unhealthy food outlets in vulnerable communities, and regulations that create significant barriers for smaller, local producers. These factors create an environment where unhealthy food is the most affordable and accessible option.

In response, the report highlights the critical importance of strengthening local food systems and community capacity. Initiatives like community gardens and food hubs offer a pathway to accessible, affordable, and culturally appropriate food, but they currently lack the scale and connectivity to create systemic change. Building a resilient local alternative requires community-led, indigenous approaches that restore traditional knowledge (mātauranga Māori) and foster collective action. Key barriers include limited access to land, unstable funding, and unsupportive policies.

Ka Ora Ka Ako, is a major and effective intervention. It directly alleviates hunger and reduces the financial burden on families while improving student well-being and engagement. Ka Ora Ka Ako holds significant untapped potential to catalyse change in the wider local food system by creating a reliable demand for locally grown produce.

Ultimately, the report concludes that improving food systems in South Auckland requires a coordinated, systems-oriented approach rather than isolated programmes and initiatives. This involves a combination of national-level policy changes to tackle low incomes and high food costs, alongside local and regional actions to build a supportive infrastructure for community-led food systems that are equitable, healthy, and resilient.

## 1.6 Potential Policy Targets

A strong, collective South Auckland voice for policies which support the food environments for better health, education, food security and environmental sustainability would create the powerful community leadership needed for policy change. The potential policy targets which have emerged from the community interviews, hui, and research findings are:

### A. Strengthen local food systems

- Prioritise innovative local food systems in the Auckland Unitary Plan 2026- (AUP2026) (Auckland Council)
- Include opportunities for consented urban farming in AUP2026 (Auckland Council)

### B. Strengthen school food systems

- Ensure Ka Ora, Ka Ako is properly funded, optimised, extended, and linked to local food systems (central government)
- Enact Healthy School Food and Drink Policies (central government)

### C. Build community capacity

- Mobilise resources for capacity building programmes (Auckland Council and other funding sources)

### D. Constrain industrial food systems

- Legislate for Council by-laws to limit the density and locations of unhealthy fast-food outlets (central government and Auckland Council)
- Ensure Auckland Transport contracts for advertising exclude unhealthy foods (Auckland Transport and Auckland Council)
- Explore regulatory options for Auckland Council to restrict unhealthy food outdoor ads within 500m of schools (central government and Auckland Council)

### E. Reduce poverty and high cost of healthy foods

- Enact multiple policies and actions to reduce poverty and the high cost of healthy food (central government).

## 1.7 Conclusions

- Food insecurity is a systemic problem, not a series of isolated issues.
- Household economics is the predominant driver of poor food consumption.
- The industrial food system actively creates an unhealthy environment.
- Community-led and indigenous approaches are essential for building a sustainable solution.
- Community collective voice is essential for system change.
- Local food systems hold potential but lack scale and connectivity.
- Ka ora ka ako is a major and untapped lever for systemic change.
- Policy and regulation are major barriers to progress.
- Food consumption is an outcome of the system, not simply a personal choice.

## 2. Introduction

This document maps the effects of the current food system on food security focused on the Māngere region, with a view to expanding to the wider South Auckland region. Using information obtained from interviews with members of the community, community workshops, and the literature, we use a system analysis to map the underlying mechanisms that create food systems and the causes and effects of food insecurity. This study focuses on connecting the various areas of knowledge into a shared understanding, to facilitate an integrated, community-grounded approach.

By combining knowledge from various sources in a model, we create a shared picture of the actual and potential effects of the food system, along with potential intervention points. The resulting model provides visual insight into the interrelationships between the effects of the food system across the community, rather than treating each one in isolation.

Where possible, these food system effects are illustrated using quotes from members of the Māngere community and publicly available data.

### 2.1 Overview of Systems Approach

#### 2.1.1 Context

Food systems are complex, interconnected, and dynamic, with each part, from production to consumption, not acting in isolation but interacting and influencing each other. Focusing on just one aspect in isolation can lead to unintended, negative consequences elsewhere in the system and our thinking has to move beyond a single-variable focus – e.g. ‘we need to break up the supermarket duopoly’ – to acknowledge multiple pathways, potential unintended consequences, and the multiple causes and consequences of the effects the community sees and experiences. There is no single fix to the deep-seated concerns that people have about our current food system<sup>1</sup>.

While our dominant industrial food system has succeeded in increasing food production and feeding a growing population, many of its practices have led to significant negative and interconnected consequences. The food system is a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, from sources like deforestation for agricultural land, the use of fossil fuels in farm machinery and transportation, and methane and nitrous oxide emissions from livestock and fertiliser use. It is also, with its emphasis on monocultures, a major factor behind increasing biodiversity loss, over use and pollution of water and soil degradation. Despite feeding more people, it only feeds people who can afford it. This is by design. The food

system is also having other negative effects on our health. Its emphasis on processed, calorie-dense but nutrient-poor foods, has created a ‘double-burden’ of a large number of people who are overweight or obese, yet lacking many of the essential micronutrients needed for healthy living<sup>2</sup>. The food system is also having significant negative social and economic consequences. Driven by a strong profit motive, the food system, despite producing a large amount of food, leaves many people in New Zealand, and around the world, without access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food<sup>3</sup>. Also, those who work in food production are amongst the lowest paid, suffering poor working conditions and high accident rates<sup>4</sup>.

In this project our concern is the fact that too many people lack ‘access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food’ and within that concern we have a focus on food insecurity and food sovereignty. Both are complex issues with many interdependent factors that require a system approach to unravel:

### Food Security

Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. It is a complex problem shaped by the interactions between household resources and the broader food environment. A systems approach provides a comprehensive perspective by:

- **Identifying Interconnected Factors:** It examines how various factors like household income, time availability, access to transportation, food prices, and the quality and variety of available food products interact dynamically to influence a household’s food security status. For instance, a household’s income, variable work schedules, and physical distance to food retailers all affect the time and money available for procuring and preparing healthy meals.
- **Revealing Dynamic Behaviour and Feedback Loops:** The approach highlights how feedback loops can amplify or stabilise change. For example, a need to supplement a family’s income by working longer hours or multiple jobs leads to a decrease in available time for meal preparation. This leads to an increase in the consumption of less healthy, convenience foods, which negatively impact health and, in turn, affect a person’s ability to work and thereby reduces their income further, creating a reinforcing cycle of poor nutrition. Conversely, a commercially successful introduction of one healthy product could encourage a retailer to introduce further healthy products.

<sup>1</sup> von Braun, Joachim et al. (2023). Science and Innovations for Food Systems Transformation. Cham (CH): Springer.

<sup>2</sup> Sonnino, R., & Milbourne, P. (2022). Food system transformation: a progressive place-based approach. *Local Environment*, 27(7), 915-926.

<sup>3</sup> Leeuwis, C., Boogaard, B. K., & Atta-Krah, K. (2021). How food systems change (or not): governance implications for system transformation processes. *Food Secur*, 13(4), 761-780.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.safetynaction.co.nz/en/about-us/news-insights/white-paper-agriculture-s-safety-crisis-turning-the-tide-on-farm-fatalities/#::-:text=Agriculture%20remains%20the%20most%20dangerous,to%20claim%20lives%20each%20year>.

- **Anticipating Unintended Consequences:** By mapping causal links and feedback relationships, a systems approach helps anticipate unintended outcomes of interventions. For example, an intervention to increase preferences for healthy meals without addressing time constraints might lead to an increase in away-from-home or fast-food consumption if healthy options aren't readily available and/or convenient. Similarly, applying a programme to help people cook affordable, healthy food at home may not be effective if time pressure remains a dominant limiting factor.
- **Holistic Policy Design:** It emphasises that single interventions are often ineffective due to complex limits, suggesting that policies should target multiple limits or drivers of food insecurity in combination. It also considers how factors like post-harvest losses, management of agricultural resources, and market price regulation are crucial for food availability and accessibility.
- **Addressing Power Dynamics and Social Justice:** A systems approach recognises and addresses the uneven power relations within food systems that can exclude certain communities from benefits. It aims to highlight the local context, the daily struggles, local leadership, and draws upon various forms of knowledge (evidence-based, experimental, and experiential).
- **Connecting Across Scales and Sectors:** Food sovereignty often emphasises local control and re-localisation. A systems approach supports this by illustrating the interdependencies between urban and rural areas, and how local food systems can be platforms for wider change, engaging various actors from civil society, government, and commercial sectors. This includes promoting school-local grower networks or local food initiatives as engines for economic development and community well-being.

## Food Sovereignty

Food sovereignty is a concept that emphasises the rights of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through sustainable methods and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. A systems approach supports this by:

- **Integrating Diverse Knowledge Systems:** It explicitly values and integrates traditional or Indigenous knowledge (like *mātauranga Māori*) and practices (*tikanga Māori*, *Talanoa*) alongside systems methods. This approach acknowledges that Indigenous peoples often have a holistic connection to land and food, intertwining culture, identity, and spirituality.
- **Prioritising Community-Led Approaches:** Systems thinking tools facilitate participatory processes, engaging community members and stakeholders in understanding complex system causes and co-designing interventions. This ensures that interventions are culturally safe and relevant to the community's needs and values, fostering local ownership and capacity for change.

## 2.2 The Link Between Systems and Indigenous Perspectives

Our view is that systems thinking and indigenous knowledge, while coming from different cultural contexts, are complementary knowledge bases, both of which can benefit from their interaction with each other. *Mātauranga Māori* and systems thinking serve as lenses through which researchers and communities can effectively negotiate and apply community-based participatory research in local contexts. Both have a shared focus on interconnections and holism<sup>5</sup>:

- A key link between these two approaches is their mutual emphasis on connections. Systems thinking focuses on the interconnections between system elements, while the Māori concept of *whakapapa* (genealogy) similarly emphasises the connections between things.
- Both paradigms assert that what we observe and experience is generated by these interconnections, and therefore, to effect change, one must understand and modify these relationships.
- This integrated approach supports a holistic view of nourishment and health, intertwining culture, identity, and spirituality with-food, which contrasts with a narrower focus on food as merely an economic commodity.

5 Glassey, R. (2025). Combining Indigenous knowledge and systems thinking to improve food systems in regional New Zealand. Community Health Equity Research and Policy.

## 3. Approach

### 3.1 Overview

Our overall approach is systems-oriented and community-led<sup>6</sup>. This approach to understanding food systems is a holistic method that goes beyond individual initiatives like community gardens or food banks to explore the interconnected causes and effects of food-related issues. It combines community knowledge with broader system understanding, recognising the food system as a complex web of social, economic, and environmental factors.

The community-led aspect places local residents and stakeholders at the centre of the planning and implementation. This ensures that the solutions developed are tailored to the specific needs and culture of the community, rather than being imposed from the outside.

This systems-thinking mindset, involves understanding how different parts of a food system – from production and processing to distribution and waste management – influence each other. For example, rather than just establishing a single food hub, it asks, for example, how that hub can connect local growers to a wider market, how policy changes can support it, and what training is needed for its staff.

This approach is essential because fragmented, individual initiatives alone cannot solve systemic food-related problems<sup>7</sup>.

**Addressing Root Causes:** A community garden is a valuable asset, but it doesn't solve the underlying issues of food insecurity, such as lack of distribution facilities to market and sell local produce, or the dominance of fast-food outlets in low-income areas. A systems-oriented approach tackles these root causes by involving stakeholders like community gardeners and city planners.

**Building Resilience:** Standalone initiatives are often vulnerable to funding cuts, leadership changes, and market shifts. By creating a coordinated network, a community can build resilience by sharing resources, diversifying funding streams, and establishing a unified voice for policy advocacy. For instance, if one food hub faces a logistical challenge, the broader network can provide support and share best practices.

**Achieving Equity:** A community-led model explicitly addresses equity by engaging groups who are most affected by an unsustainable food system. It ensures that solutions are designed to benefit everyone, rather than just a select few, leading to more inclusive and long-lasting change.

### 3.2 Steps

#### 3.2.1 Interviews

Interviews were conducted with 15 leaders within the South Auckland community involved in various aspects of the food system. The interviews were conducted by Pacific and Māori researchers with strong connections into their respective communities.

While each interview followed the specific areas of interest of the interviewee, the interview wove through three key questions;

1. What did they see as the key 'food system' issues facing people in South Auckland?
2. What was driving these issues and how were the activities they were involved in contribute to addressing them
3. What were the potential and likely outcomes of the issues being addressed successfully or not.

The Talanoa approach<sup>8</sup> was used in the interviews. This is a Pacific approach to interpersonal, qualitative research which honours relationality, respect, and reciprocity, allowing participants to speak freely and safely. These were analysed using the Tivaevae framework<sup>9</sup>, a Cook Islands methodology that reflects collective meaning-making and layered insight.

#### 3.2.2 Literature

Members of the research team had been involved in previous work on food system and used that experience to incorporate up-to-date literature into the project. Additional literature searches were undertaken to explore themes arising out of the interviews.

#### 3.2.3 Data Collection

There is very limited data, specific to South Auckland, that is available. The data in this report is used to highlight the themes that have emerged out of the interviews and literature.

The qualitative data, comprises quotes from those interviewed and provide community perspectives on the key issues and policy options identified. The quantitative data used in this report is publicly available data. We have not aimed to collect data specific to South Auckland as very limited data is available. Instead, the quantitative included in this report aims to illustrate the size and scope of the issue discussed, within each theme.

6 McKelvie-Sebileau, P., Pekapo, C., Rees, D., Swinburn, B., Gerritsen, S., & Tipene-Leach, D. (2022). Applying the complementary knowledge bases of System Dynamics and Indigenous knowledge in public health research in Aotearoa, New Zealand. *AlterNative*, 18(4).

7 Roggio, A. M. (2019). A systems thinking approach to the integration of food insecurity policy. *Journal of Public Affairs*, 19(3).

8 Vaoletti, T. M. (2013, 2013/01/01). Talanoa: Differentiating the Talanoa Research Methodology from phenomenology, narrative, Kaupapa Māori and feminist methodologies. *Te Reo*, 56/57, 191-212

9 Futter-Puati, D., & Maua-Hodges, T. (2019). Stitching Tivaevae: a Cook Islands research method. *AlterNative*, 00(0), 1-10

### 3.2.4 Mapping

The system maps used in this report are a visual tool used to describe the components of the food system and the relationships between them that contribute to the community's experience of food insecurity. The initial maps were developed based on the interviews. These maps were then enhanced by including variables known in the literature to be important. These additions did not change any of the key themes or areas of focus. They simply added detail to what was discussed in the interviews.

The exception to this was 'school food'. School food programmes were not discussed much in the interviews. It was added to the maps based on prior community-based research on Ka Ora, Ka Ako, including quantitative and qualitative evaluations, system dynamics modelling, impact assessments, Value for Investment analyses, and feedback from principals and students. The section of the maps concerned with school food was informed by the research experience some members of the team who had previously worked with communities and Ka Ora Ka Ako, and knowledge of the literature.

### 3.2.5 Community Workshop

One workshop was held with invited members of the community. Those invited were people who had been interviewed along with other community leaders. The purpose of the workshop was twofold:

1. Feedback from participants on the key causes and consequences of food insecurity we had identified in the interviews
2. Identify potential actions to address the issues

The results of the workshop were used to further refine the system maps and to describe potential actions within each theme.

## 4. Themes

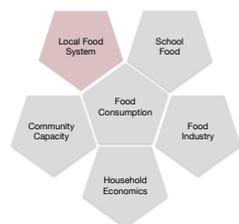
### 4.1 Introduction to Themes and Areas of Focus

Interviews with members of the Māngere community provided the basis for developing an initial map of food systems, and their effect on food security. From this map six themes emerged and these are introduced below. The following sections will discuss each theme in depth describing:

- where the theme fits within the overall system,
- qualitative and quantitative data that illustrates the effect on the community in South Auckland,
- potential policy levers and intervention points

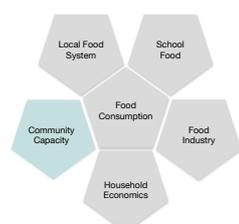


### 4.2 Overview of Themes



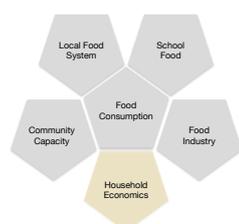
**Local Food Systems:** Local food production and distribution can significantly enhance food security and well-being by providing accessible, affordable, and culturally appropriate food, while fostering community resilience and health. Aspects of local food systems that are well established include community gardens, food hubs, food rescue and food banks. All of these are active in South Auckland and play a vital role in helping people to alleviate some of the worst effects of food insecurity. But, on their own they will never be able to help all those that are in need or be able to address the root causes of low incomes and high food costs.

However, building on what already exists, the right leadership and policy settings can enable these initiatives to not only grow but to work more closely together and develop a local food system that can, at least partially, address the cost of food by increasing access to local, affordable and nutritious food.



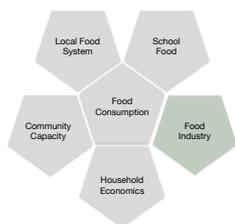
**Community Capacity:** Building community capacity to develop local and sustainable food systems needs to be led by the community itself. In South Auckland this means that indigenous approaches must come to the fore. Local and indigenous approaches to building community capacity are an important part of enhancing food security, and promoting holistic well-being. They are rooted in a deep, interconnected understanding of land, people, and traditional practices, fostering self-reliance and resilience within communities. They are well suited to support the development of local food systems, which to be successful must be built upon strong collaborative foundations.

Community capacity underpins efforts to increase local food production and distribution, to empower whānau through education and skill building, leverage cultural values and community networks and to provide advice for and influence policies.



**Household Economics:** The resources available to households profoundly shape food security and overall well-being, by directly influencing access to nutritious food and daily lifestyle choices. A significant barrier is the high cost of healthy food, which frequently forces families to opt for cheaper, less nutritious alternatives.

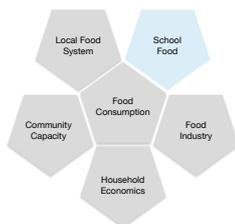
The financial ability to buy sufficient healthy food for a household depends largely on the balance between household income and food prices. Since 'time is money', available time to prepare food is also factored into household 'budgets'. Families operating on low incomes and constrained time struggle the most with food security. Most of the policy solutions lie on the household income side, including the general state of the economy and the use of specific policy levers such as minimum wage levels, requirements for living wages, level of benefits, and barriers to access benefits and housing. There are some policy levers on the food prices side (eg. reducing GST on healthy food or increasing supermarket competition), but these are politically very challenging.



**Industrial Food Systems:** The pure economic (i.e. profit-driven) purpose of the industrial food system significantly impacts food security and the well-being of communities in South Auckland, primarily by making healthy and nutritious food less accessible and more expensive, while promoting unhealthy and more convenient options.

The prevailing economic model of mass production and consumption prioritises profit, along with the duopoly of supermarkets, and the priority given to exports, leads to high food costs.

In addition, the policy landscape is dominated by the needs of large growers, distributors and retailers. The community has very little say, let alone control, in the food environments they live in. There is no legal means by which Council or the community can refuse a new fast-food outlet opening next to a school on health grounds. Other jurisdictions have planning laws which give the community a greater say on their local food environments.



**School Food:** School food programmes, like Ka Ora, Ka Ako, have the potential to become a major vehicle for change in the development of local, equitable and healthy food systems.

School food programmes provide an explicit provision of healthy food to children and thereby have a direct effect on helping to alleviate food insecurity and addressing the effects of poverty at the household level. International evidence, including systematic reviews of universal free lunch programmes, indicates significant reductions in food insecurity, particularly in food-insecure households, and early evaluations of Ka Ora Ka Ako, prior to the current funding cuts, show success in reducing hunger and food insecurity by increasing students' reported satiety and reliable access to healthy food.



**Food Consumption:** The food that people consume is not just driven by personal choices. The themes introduced above all contribute to people choosing a diet that is dominated by ultra-processed, convenient foods which are high in sugars, salt and fats.

The predominant factor is the high cost of nutritious food, when combined with low incomes making healthy food unaffordable for many households. Another major factor is the high concentrations of fast-food outlets in poorer communities, making unhealthy foods much more available and accessible.

Cultural and behavioural factors also play a role with younger generations often disconnected from traditional food practices and the land due to urbanisation, often preferring convenience foods over traditional and home-prepared foods. This may be combined with an increasing lack of confidence or knowledge about growing and preparing food, and the use of traditional approaches and local produce.

And, all of this takes place in a broader, systemic policy context that i) prioritises mass production and consumption for profit, over any other outcomes, ii) creates rules and regulation that are designed to meet the needs of large growers, distributors and retailers, and iii) focuses government investment on short-term social-welfare needs, rather than investment in long-term community health and food initiatives that could yield greater societal benefits.

## 5. Theme 1: Local Food Systems

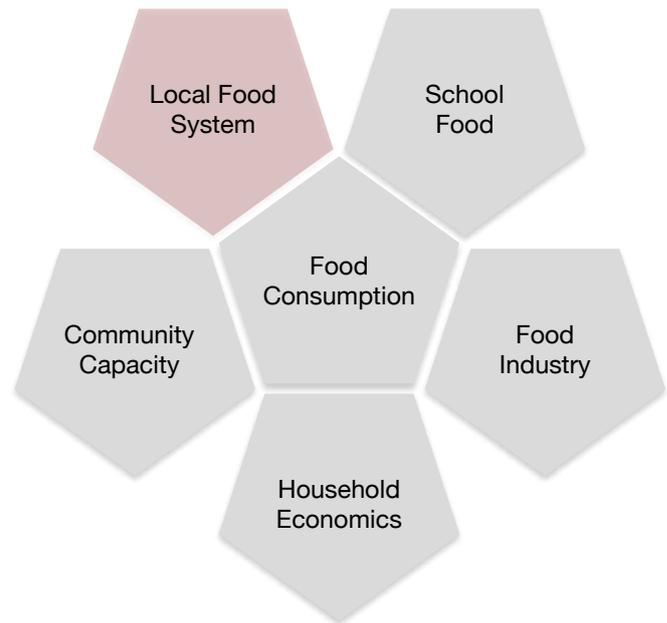
### 5.1 Introduction

Local food systems, incorporating both food production and distribution can significantly enhance food security, food sovereignty and well-being by providing accessible, affordable, and culturally appropriate food, while fostering community resilience and health. The common feature that distinguishes local food systems from industrial food systems is that they have a social purpose. They do have to have a sustainable economic model to endure, and they may also make a profit, but profit-making is not their primary purpose. Economic sustainability can come from selling products, but also from grants, volunteering and other sources of revenue and resources. While local food systems are very small part of the overall food supply, there are many innovative models being developed and applied including community gardens, urban farming, food hubs, food rescue systems, food banks, social supermarkets, social distribution systems, social restaurants and cafes.

From a food security perspective, local food systems directly address the high cost of healthy food, which is a major barrier for communities, particularly in South Auckland. Initiatives such as community gardens, exemplified by those at Papatūānuku Marae, Ravenage Park, and teaching gardens, enable growing food at low or no cost, helping to offset the rising cost of living and reducing reliance on supermarkets. The Papatoetoe Food Hub was a community-led initiative that operated a cafe offering affordable, nutritious and culturally appropriate meals, while also creating local employment opportunities. It played a key role in promoting food sovereignty by encouraging practices such as home gardening and seed saving - empowering families to become more self-sufficient and resilient in the face of disruptions to the broader food system. It no longer operates as Papatoetoe food hub but is now known as the Food Hub Collective operating under IAM Māngere.

Beyond immediate food access, local food production also contributes to well-being:

- **Physical Health:** Access to naturally grown, nutritious food directly combats the prevalence of unhealthy options that contribute to obesity and diet-related diseases. Programmes like Turuki Healthcare’s cooking classes have demonstrated success in helping individuals manage diabetes through healthy eating.
- **Mental and Spiritual Health:** A connection to the land (whenua) is described as a source of strength, identity, and healing. Engaging in gardening, observing nature, and working with the earth can ground individuals and



promote mental well-being.

- **Cultural Preservation:** Local food systems help reclaim and sustain traditional Māori and Pacific practices and knowledge (Mātauranga), such as Maramataka (lunar calendar) and Hua Parakore principles for pure food cultivation. This intergenerational sharing of knowledge strengthens cultural identity and ensures ancestral practices are passed down.
- **Community and Social Fabric:** Community gardens and food hubs foster social connection, fellowship, and a sense of collective pride. They can also provide employment opportunities and build strong community networks, particularly through established groups like churches and league clubs.

Despite these clear benefits, challenges remain, including limited land availability for growing in urban areas, insufficient and unstable funding for community-led initiatives, and regulations that hinder local groups from commercialising their produce. There is also a societal shift towards convenience and away from physical labour, impacting engagement in food growing. It is challenging for local food systems to achieve scale and revenue flow, so they cannot compete economically with the industrial food system – they almost always require some sort of ‘leg-up’ to help them become viable. This can be in the form of low-cost or no-cost land or premises, government funding, philanthropic funding, volunteer labour, or koha.

## 5.2 Sub-model

### Explanation of Sub-model

The development of local food systems requires that social food enterprises become connected and better resourced. Individually, they are unable to either grow or distribute enough food to have a significant impact on food consumption in the community. Their effect will always be very localised. Some enterprises, such as urban farming, will require policy changes in the Auckland Unitary Plan – at the moment, the AUP is silent on urban farming, making it not a legal activity.

While these local initiatives are the foundation for any local food system, the shift from individual initiatives to a region-wide food system, requires stronger connections between each, and a means of aggregating and distributing their produce. This will require supportive policies and investment in local infrastructure.

The Local Food System has a number of interactions with the broader food system. Through the educational emphasis of community gardens it builds peoples' knowledge of how

to grow and store food and thereby having the potential to affect household economics by reducing the costs of feeding the whānau.

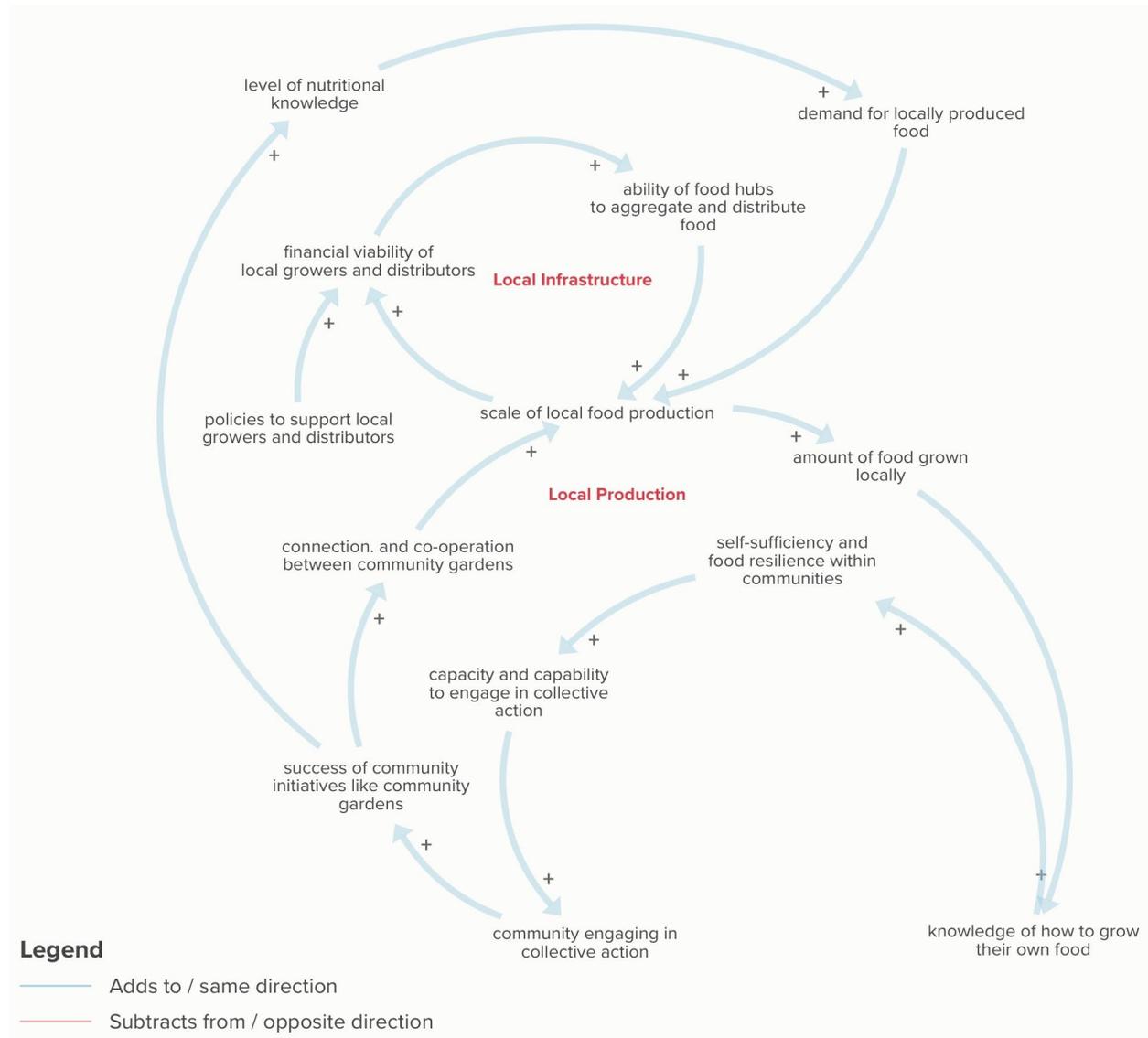
It also provides local employment thus further affecting household economics of some community members. In this way it is strongly linked to the school food system, which can help, with the right policy settings, to create a demand for local foods and thereby make the development of a local food system more economically viable.

It can also have an impact on the dominant food system by decreasing the community's reliance on food sources external to their community.

### Feedback Loops

**Local Production:** involves building upon the food growing activities already taking place in the community and developing a supportive policy environment that supports local growers to step up into larger urban farms

**Local Infrastructure:** requires investment or resources and supportive policies to establish the local infrastructure for local social food enterprises to flourish.



### 5.3 Areas of Focus

Discussions with the community in the workshop highlighted key areas of focus within the theme of Local Food Systems:

- Development of community gardens
- Ability for urban farming to be legally undertaken
- Development of alternative food distribution systems
- The lack of support for small local growers, due to the dominance of supermarkets and the industrial food system
- Other opportunities such as social supermarkets, social restaurants and cafes, combining food rescue and food bank activities

### 5.4 Illustrative Data

#### 5.4.1 Qualitative Data

##### Economic Viability

*“I’m 100% sure that we could have a food system that’s actually generating money at the same time as generating health and well-being for the community. Just need to find that balance.” (FS\_8)*

##### Community Led

*“What if we created an option for the community to really experience and prototype, or try to have a food business that is led by community, for the community.” (FS\_8)*

##### Indigenous Approaches

*The kōrero has always been about giving the power back to our whānau in terms of growing food growing Kai, around the Hua Parakore principles. That’s the ideal.” (FS\_6)*

##### Helping Whānau to Grow Food

*“I would love for us to have a garden box kit for every whānau, and you make it. One of the things you want to do is make it so it’s easy for whānau.” (FS\_10)*

##### Policy Settings

*“Existing rules and regulations, such as MPI standards and food control plans, create barriers for local community food initiatives to sell their produce... There is no specific legal structure (like ‘for purpose for profit’ companies) that supports social enterprises focused on community food systems.” (FS\_8)*

#### Community Resources Working Together

*“How do we get like maraes and church, that do have space and can be producing food to work together? It’s not because they don’t want it. There’s, inside here we have some rules and regulations that don’t allow you to do that.” (FS\_8)*

*If all of those gardens could create a cooperative and work together, profit out of all of this. And paying people salaries and having this space. There’s an economic gain for those people, it’s not asking people to work for free, it’s asking people to work, get paid, normal wages and feel good about it because you’re helping your community.”*

#### 5.4.2 Quantitative Data

A “food desert” is defined as a geographical area characterised by limited access to plentiful, affordable, and nutritious food, specifically referring to retail outlets such as supermarkets. For urban areas in New Zealand, a food desert is identified as a portion of a suburb with a minimum of 250 people, containing at least 30% of the suburb’s population, and being more than 2 minutes driving time (approximately 1.5 km) from the nearest supermarket. South Auckland is particularly notable for containing “large swathes of urban areas identified as food deserts”. A significant proportion of these food deserts are also located within high deprivation index zones.





### 5.5.2 Potential Interventions Identified in the Community Workshop

- Creating markets for local food
- Developing values-based co-operative models
- Local trading/sharing crops
- Rua kumara – food hubs, storage
- Pataka kai
- Community informed/designed frameworks
- Restorative spaces
- Traditional food growing and cooking programmes
- Legal structures for social enterprise
- Scaling current grassroots initiatives
- Urban food havens
- ‘Everyday eats’ bowling club
- Thirds spaces: churches, sports clubs, reserves,

### 5.5.3 Policy Pathways Identified in Interviews With Auckland Council

#### Community Gardens

Community Gardens are already a permitted activity within the Auckland Unitary Plan (AUP) if proposed upon open spaced sites, such as Auckland Council-owned public reserve land. Applications for community gardens on land with this status go through the Local Boards for landowner approval and there are support systems in place for this which are detailed on the relevant Auckland Council webpage<sup>10</sup> and accompanying guidelines<sup>11</sup>, noting the application process accommodates proposals for small, medium, or large-scale gardens, food forests, orchards, teaching gardens, or allotment gardens.

Support from the Council Advisor, local mana whenua, and the independent Māori Statutory Board will all increase the chances of successful applications. If there is strong local demand for more or expanded community gardens, then community engagement with these entities will be critical and this is dependent on the capacity and strength of a coalition of stakeholders to undertake this work.

Local Board plans guide priorities for community gardens in Local Board areas, noting that all Local Boards are open to receiving applications. These are initially reviewed by Council staff to determine if the garden proposal is viable, in alignment with obligations under legislation such as the Reserves Act and Local Government Act, wider Council strategies for the open space in question and if the growing space plan has sufficient community support (the relevant Local Board or mana whenua iwi group may provide input at this stage). The input from Parks and Community Facilities Advisors is critical to Board decisions.

Simultaneously, there is a current national planning direction process underway driven by central government to strengthen infrastructure with the policy tool being a new Infrastructure National Policy Statement (INPS)<sup>12</sup> for Councils to give effect to in their respective statutory planning documents. In response to pressure from councils to have parks and reserves included in this NPS as ‘social infrastructure’. The current draft INPS includes this proposition which is strongly supported by Auckland Council. It is anticipated this will boost the status and impetus for strengthening the provision of community gardens within parks and reserves once they are recognised as ‘social infrastructure’ in the final approved INPS, particularly in response to meeting the demand for additional open space to support residential intensification in urban areas.

Access to land is a challenge and South Auckland is not well served by land availability, including the availability of suitable parks and reserves for establishing community gardens, with South Auckland Local Board areas having traditionally suffered from a lack of quality open space, despite accommodating increasing levels of residential intensification since the AUP became partly operative in November 2016. The Parks and Community Spaces Policy Team determine rules for suitability for use of land for gardens, but the Open Space Acquisitions Team are responsible for purchasing land. They can be reluctant to purchase land because of budget constraints and the ongoing costs of maintenance, but it is hoped that Auckland Council's recent adoption of ‘Manaaki Tāmaki Makaurau: Auckland Open Space, Sport and Recreation Strategy’<sup>13</sup> will assist with overcoming such barriers through increased funding and resourcing to both acquire and maintain open space for the benefit of local communities, particularly in relation to increased opportunities for establishing community gardens<sup>14</sup>.

Land set aside for the provision of public open space is part of the requirements on developers of intensive housing projects and these requirements are detailed in Manaaki Tāmaki Makaurau. The greater the requirements are, the more reluctant developers are because this eats into their profits. However, some are very willing to create quality public open spaces, particularly well-resourced development companies which have a greater emphasis on creating quality urban environments which enable local communities to develop and thrive in such environments. The policy planning provisions for these requirements sit with the Unitary Plan, and these support the operational open space policy provisions in Manaaki Tāmaki Makaurau, including calculations used and policies applied to determine open space acquisition requirements in response to residential intensification.

10 <https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/Pages/default.aspx>

11 <https://new.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/en/environment/what-you-can-do-for-environment/join-community-programme/growing-kai-community-spaces.html>

12 <https://environment.govt.nz/publications/attachment-1-1-proposed-provisions-new-national-policy-statement-for-infrastructure/>

13 <https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/plans-projects-policies-reports-bylaws/Documents/auckland-open-space-sport-recreation-strategy.pdf>

14 Refer to pages 11 and 30 of Manaaki Tāmaki Makaurau for references to the importance of utilising open space to grow food and making space for local communities to grow and access food as an identified social benefit associated with Objective 1 of Manaaki Tāmaki Makaurau to increase the range of benefits delivered by open space network.



## Urban Farms

Urban Farming is not a permitted activity in the current AUP. There is considerable ambiguity about what constitutes UF given it's not defined in the AUP and therefore not the subject of specifically tailored provisions to support the establishment of UF on public open space land. The AUP will begin to be reviewed from Nov 2026, giving opportunities for groups to advocate for new provisions for UF, although this should be preceded by targeted internal and external engagement between the Unitary Plan review team and Healthy Families South Auckland (internally) and Health Coalition Aotearoa (externally) to inform the drafting of updates sought to the AUP for the purpose of enabling UF.

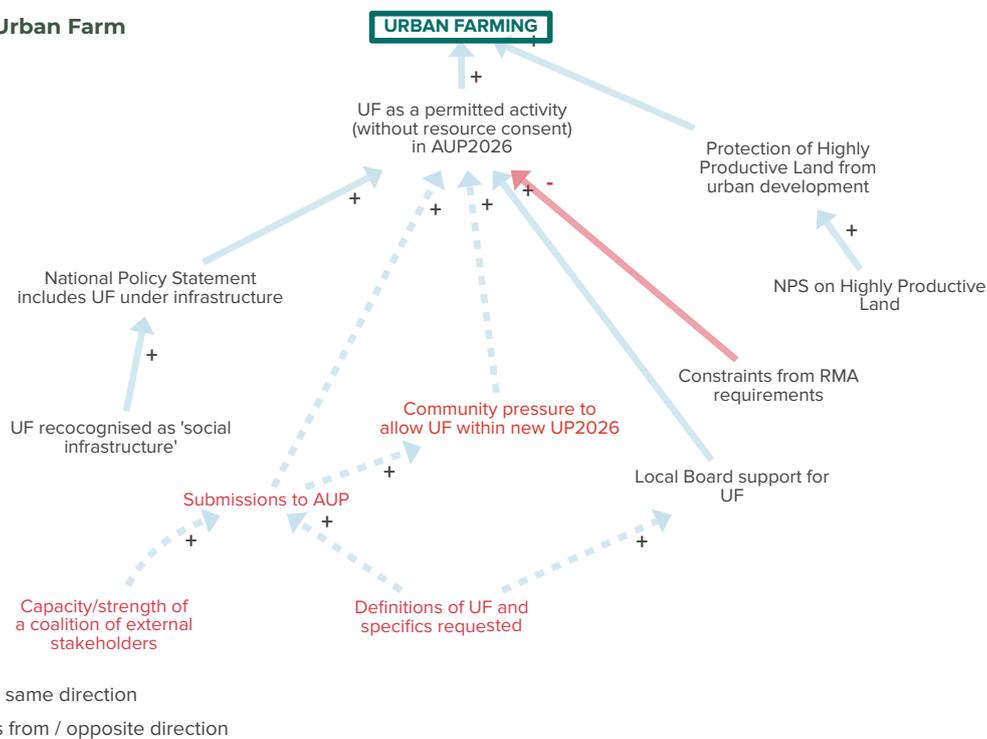
Having parks and reserves included in the Proposed Infrastructure National Policy Statement as 'social infrastructure' will help with the specific inclusion and

recognition of urban farms in the UP review for 2026 as a social infrastructure related activity anticipated upon parks and reserves in an urban setting.

Having UF as a permitted activity but requiring resource consent where compliance with permitted activity standards is not met will create a major hurdle. Thus, if the specific aspects of UF (e.g. composting, keeping animals) can be kept below the need for resource consent through appropriate permitted activity standards which are readily achievable and not onerous in nature, that would facilitate UF. Therefore, the accompanying permitted activity definitions and specifications for UF will be very important.

A National Policy Statement (NPS) on Highly Productive Lands (2022) gives Councils greater powers to protect fertile land from urban development, although it should be noted that such land is generally rural in nature so would not be applicable in an urban environment.

### Establishing an Urban Farm



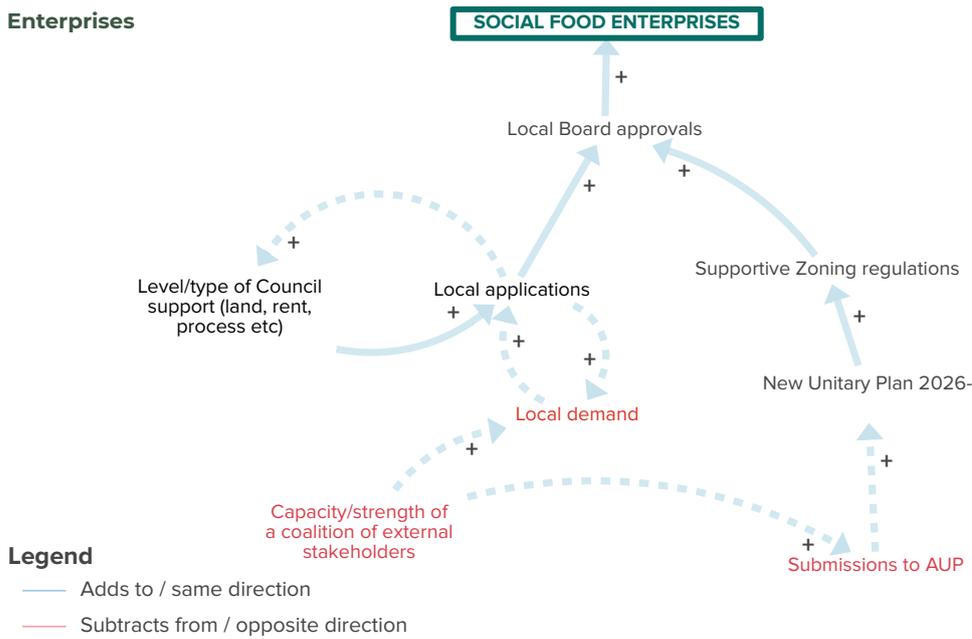
### Social Food Enterprises

Social food enterprises include a range of initiatives to support food security, nutrition, and local food systems (e.g. food rescue, social supermarkets, social food distribution, social eating enterprises, food hubs, training programmes, other community food related programmes). They are typically not-for-profit but do need to be underpinned by viable economic models for sustainability. Part of those models is getting a ‘leg up’ from council (e.g. land, low rents, funding, process support).

Local Boards are central because they receive and approve applications. Getting the economic model right is critical and really needs Council support financially (e.g. low rents), procedurally (e.g. helping with any resource consents) and from supportive zoning regulations. These regulations will be reviewed in the next Unitary Plan so submitting to that will be crucial.

Currently, Mixed and Commercial zoning are the most favourable for social food enterprises, with Industrial and Residential being more challenging.

### Social Food Enterprises



## 5.6 Major Policy Opportunities

The timing is ideal to get a concerted push for support for local food systems through the new AUP2026. Consultation starts in 2026 and lasts for about 1-2 years. Full engagement with Local Boards, Local Board staff, councillors, Independent Māori Statutory Board, and mana whenua will be essential. A strong, collective community stakeholders will be needed to support action on the following policies.

- The new AUP2026 needs to a) place a high value on local food systems to improve the health and well-being of Aucklanders, b) encourage Local Boards to include local food systems in their plans, c) recognise urban farming as a permissible activity with specified practices that do not need resource consent.
- Council needs to prioritise local food systems so that Council resources (land, premises, funding, staff support etc) can flow.

## 5.7 Local Food Systems: Key Takeaways

- ✓ **Core Purpose and Benefits:** Local food systems, which include both food production and distribution, are essential for enhancing food security and well-being in communities like South Auckland. They aim to provide accessible, affordable, and culturally appropriate food, which fosters community health and resilience.
- ✓ **Addressing Food Costs and Reliance on Supermarkets:** A primary function of local food systems is to directly combat the high cost of healthy food, a major barrier for many families. Initiatives like community gardens and food hubs help reduce reliance on supermarkets and offset the rising cost of living.
- ✓ **Holistic Well-being:** The benefits extend beyond immediate food access to include improved physical health from more nutritious food, enhanced mental and spiritual health through a connection to the land (whenua), cultural preservation of traditional Māori and Pacific knowledge, and a stronger social fabric through community connection and employment.
- ✓ **Need for a Connected System:** For local food systems to have a significant impact, individual initiatives like community gardens and food hubs must become connected. A shift from isolated projects to a region-wide system requires stronger links, infrastructure for aggregating and distributing produce, and supportive policies.
- ✓ **Key Challenges:** Despite their benefits, local food systems face several challenges, including limited land availability in urban areas, insufficient and unstable funding, and regulations that hinder local groups from selling their produce commercially.
- ✓ **The Role of Local Government and Collaboration:** Auckland Council's Local Boards are critical players in approving applications for community gardens and social food enterprises. The success of these initiatives often depends on council support (e.g., land, low rents, funding) and the capacity of local coalitions to engage with mana whenua, council advisors, and other stakeholder.
- ✓ **Interactions with the Broader Food System:** Local food systems are not isolated; they interact with and can influence the broader system. They can build household knowledge on growing food, provide local employment, link to school food programmes to create demand for local produce, and ultimately decrease a community's reliance on external food sources.

## 6. Theme 2: Community Capacity

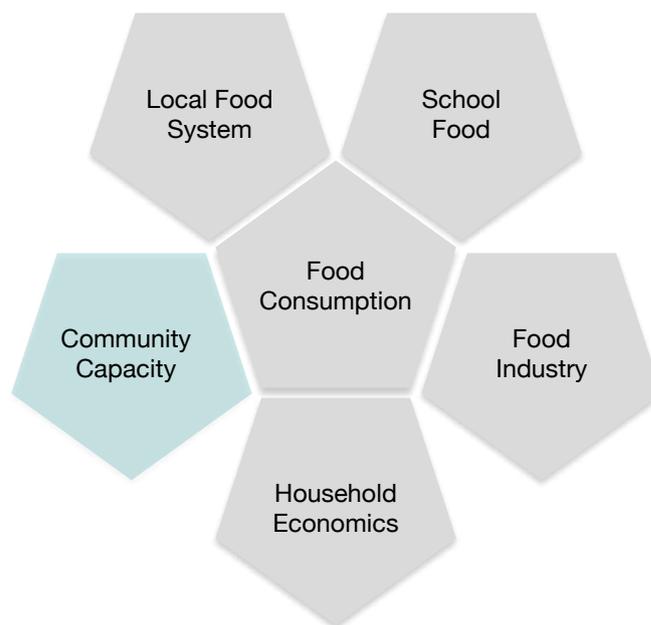
### 6.1 Introduction

Local and indigenous approaches to building community capacity are an important part of enhancing food security, and promoting holistic well-being. Grounded in an interconnected understanding of land, people, and traditional practices, fostering self-reliance, resilience and collective strength within communities.

A core tenet of these approaches is the reclamation and utilisation of whenua (land) for food production, often through community gardens and initiatives like Papatūānuku Kōkiri Marae and Te Ahiwaru. These spaces not only provide direct access to fresh, nutritious, and culturally appropriate kai (food), but also serve as intergenerational learning hubs where Mātauranga Māori (traditional knowledge) relating to growing, planting, harvesting (e.g., Hua Parakore principles, Maramataka), and food preparation is shared and practiced. By reducing dependence on expensive, processed supermarket options, these initiatives directly address food security while advancing food sovereignty and self-sufficiency. For example, the Papatoetoe Food Hub demonstrated the viability of a community-led model that provides affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate meals.

These approaches extend far beyond sustenance. Improved Physical health is supported through greater access to fresh, healthy produce and traditional diets, helping combat obesity and diet-related illnesses. Programmes like Turuki Healthcare’s “Kai and Kōrero” have shown remarkable success in managing diabetes and improving mobility through cooking classes and a focus on nutritious food. The connection to whenua and engaging in gardening activities offers profound mental and spiritual benefits, restoring identity, belonging and healing, especially for those impacted by intergenerational trauma.

Furthermore, these approaches also enhance whanaungatanga and strengthen social cohesion and community capacity. Initiatives like the Kai Ika project at Papatūānuku Kōkiri Marae, where fish heads and frames are shared across the community, feeding many while



reinforcing tikanga-based models of reciprocity and care. Community gardens, marae, churches and community hubs act as safe spaces for collective work, learning, connection and shared purpose. These environments help address social isolation and reinforce a sense of belonging, while also creating employment opportunities and pathways to qualifications through roles in food production, education and environmental restoration. Embedded in all of this is manaakitanga (hospitality/caring for others), the caring for others, and a collective ethos that prioritises the well-being of all over individual gain.

While systemic challenges remain, such as land availability, inconsistent funding, regulatory frameworks that are designed for large corporations persist, the inherent resilience, adaptability and cultural integrity of indigenous food systems continue to demonstrate their potential for sustainable and healthy futures. Prioritising and resourcing community-led, culturally-grounded solutions offers a path to long term food security, community capability and holistic well-being.

## 6.2 Sub-model

### Explanation of the sub-model

Community capacity underpins the development of local food systems.

Local and indigenous approaches to developing this capacity food systems can offer a powerful model. Grounded in whenua, whakapapa and whanaungatanga, these core values emphasise collective action, mātauranga, and reciprocal relationships with the environment and the people. Unlike industrial food systems that are driven by profit, taking an indigenous approach prioritises whānau and hāpori (community) well-being, cultural identity and long-term sustainability. Local and uindigenous approaches focus not just on producing food, but is also about producing thriving communities.

These approaches to community capability create a strong link to the larger model. An important link is to the development of local food systems where the ability of the

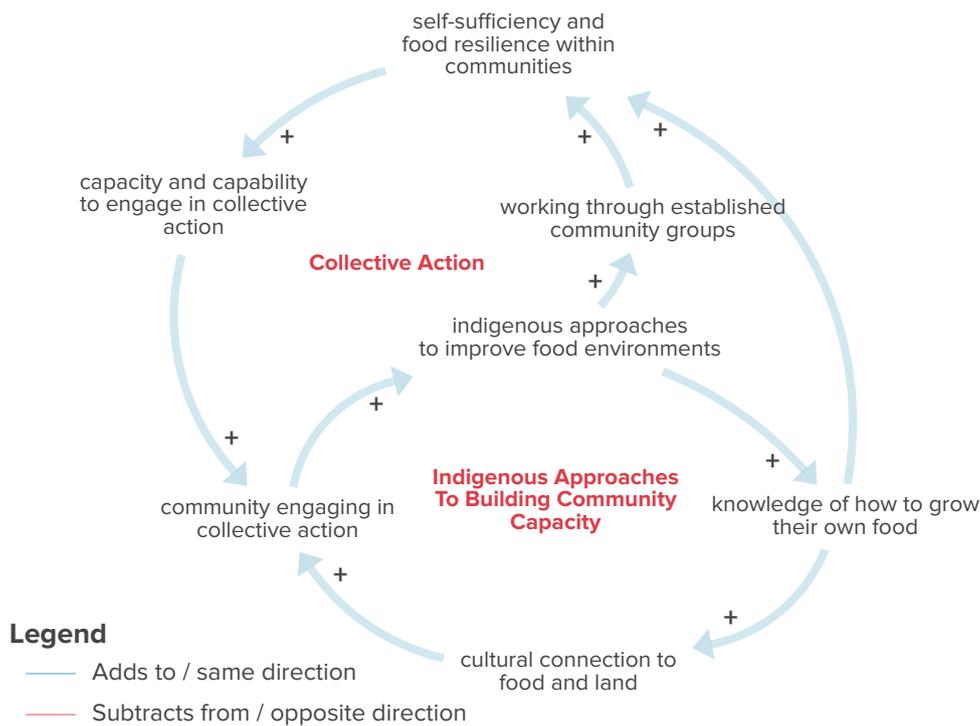
'community to engage in collective action' provides strong support for the connection and co-operation between community gardens, an important element involved in the development of local food systems.

In addition, increased 'knowledge of how to grow their own food' decreases 'reliance on external food sources' a key element affecting the 'Cost to Feed Whānau' and overall 'Household Economics'.

### Feedback Loops

**Indigenous Approaches:** are key to improving food environments and helping people increase their knowledge of how to grow food. That in turn creates a stronger connection to the whenua and the motivation and capability to act collectively.

**Community Capability:** builds upon these actions, working through existing community agencies, increasing self-sufficiency and food resilience.



## 6.3 Areas of Focus

Discussions with the community highlighted key areas of focus within the theme of Community Capability:

- Loss of traditional food gathering and growing practices (mahinga kai), knowledge (mātauranga), and language related to food
- Reactivation of cultural and indigenous food sovereignty practices
- Support for collective action

## 6.4 Illustrative Data

### 6.4.1 Qualitative Data

#### Connection of Kai to Whakapapa and Identity

*“Kai is part of our whakapapa.”*

*“Hua Parakore goes deeper than anything else, because you’ve got to follow the whakapapa of the seed, the soil, the manure you use, the hay that the horse ate... you’ve got to know the whakapapa of everything.”*

#### Innovation and Adaptation in Traditional Practices

*“When our whānau came here from Hawaiki and noticed that the climate here was much colder than the Pacific they developed a type of technology known as tapapa.”*

*“We need to be converting people over from the calendar to tohu whenua to understand when you’re supposed to work the whenua to get your Kai in.”*

#### Upskilling, Capacity Building and Whānau Employment

*“That’s the goal of the hākari atamira ... our ancestors used to build these hākari atamira so that we could celebrate the successes of our Kai systems and show them off.”*

*“Upskilling our whānau in Hua Parakore and Mahinga kai.”*

*“Our rangatahi learned to be beekeepers ... trying to create a model from kura through to the workforce.”*

*“We’re working with kura right now to identify the unit standards that we can teach around mātauranga Māori relating to the awa, water quality, trapping.”*

#### Challenges – Lack of Resources, Time, Land and Continuity

*“Lack of resources, lack of mātauranga, lack of confidence, lack of whenua... Time is a huge factor.”*

*“We lack land, we lack knowledge, we lack time, but we have a lot of people ... the positive is that you’ll always have people there to help you if you want it. The negative is that there’s more mouths to feed.”*

*“Otherwise, there’s not really groups of people or community groups ... keen on continuous gardening ... farms with kai rotting because there’s no one to pick it.”*

*“I think South Auckland has overcrowded houses, no backyard ... people had to choose between a garden or a tramp or a barbecue table or a shed.”*

#### Practising Kaitiakitanga and Mana Motuhake

*“For us, it’s about exercising kaitiakitanga, mana motuhake, rangatiratanga on our whenua and living as our authentic selves, living and being and doing as we would as Te Ahiwaru whānau, as ahikā of this whenua.”*

*“From our perspective, our food systems we talk about are for the manu, the ika, the tuna. What we plant has to feed them.”*

*“Taiao and our mauri ora ... when the Taiao is well, everyone’s well.”*

#### Employment and Whānau-led Initiatives

*“Our whānau employ our whānau to work in our māra kai and run a lot of kaupapa wānanga around kai.”*

#### Rangatahi Engagement and Succession Planning

*“So now we currently have five rangatahi engaged on the whenua. One of those is just stepping into a team leadership role ... we’re doing a recruitment drive around our mana whenua rōpū and rangatahi Māori that are interested in the space.”*

*“We’ve got a really good rangatahi engagement here. A lot of our young ones have been brought into the kaupapa ... and so a lot of them have gone into further employment, whether that be at our marae rākau, nursery or in some of the wai or pest plant management kaupapa that we’ve got on.”*

*“Starting with kura, they actually get some sort of idea about what mahi tiaki taiao looks like. Even just inspire one of them to go into that workforce ... we utilise wānanga calling in the different mātanga.”*

#### Community Participation and Collective Action

*“We have holiday programmes or wānanga, we always tend to try and prioritise a visit for them and every year we run planting days for our whānau to get involved in.”*

*“Kai needs to be celebrated and worked on every day but as a whānau.”*

#### Maramataka and Mātauranga Innovation

*Our kaupapa in maramataka is about collecting observations so that a maramataka relevant to the puhinui can be reestablished ... based on Dr Ihirangi Heke’s model of tohutaka, and that has become our health and safety type model.”*

#### Aspirations – Sustainable, Innovative Kai Futures

*“Māra kai, that people are growing for the season that we’re in. Seed saving is a thing within whānau, and every child is raised to know that we grow kai as well as grow our seeds.”*

*“Every community should have kai oranga ... composting systems ... soils are the start of it.”*

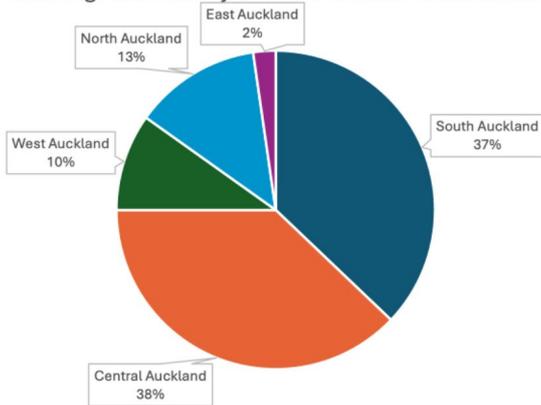
*“Connecting the Taiao and Hauora, that’s an innovative concept.”*

### 6.4.2 Quantitative Data

It is clear that there are a large number of community gardens in South Auckland. What is not known is how extensive they are. We don't know what they produce, how much they produce or who receives their produce.

To build upon the community gardens that already exist in South Auckland it will be important to gather data on these issues.

Percentage Community Gardens Tāmāki Mākaaurau 2022



Region	No.
South Auckland	49
Central Auckland	50
West Auckland	13
North Auckland	17
East Auckland	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>132</b>

### 6.5 Policy Levers and Intervention Points

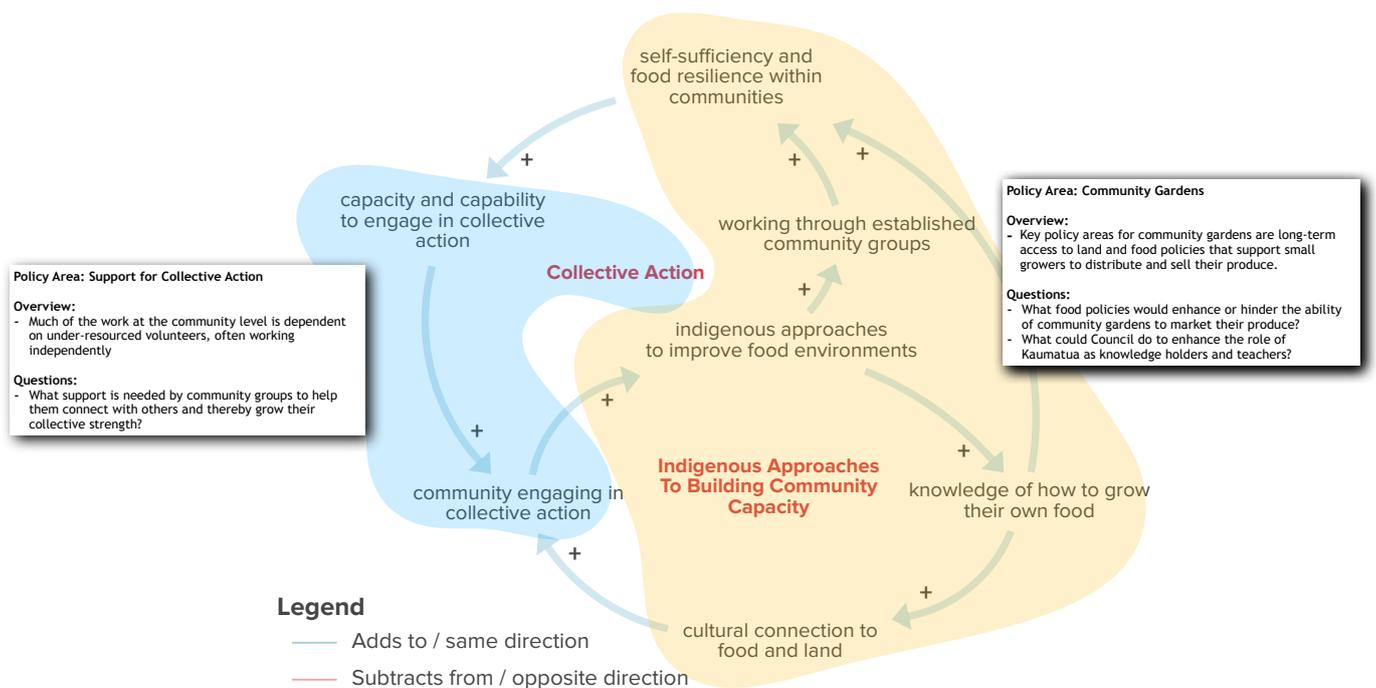
#### 6.5.1 Policy Map

Key areas of policy focus include land access, food regulations for small growers and support for collective action.

Security of land tenure is important if communities are going to invest in local production and food regulations need to take into account the specific needs of local, often volunteer-led initiatives.

In addition, Council needs invest in support systems that would enable individual initiatives to work more collaboratively and help them move beyond individual community gardens to a more sustainable local food system.

**Indigenous Food Systems as a Framework for Community Capability:** There are clear opportunities for policy to better support community capability. This includes enabling access to land for māra kai, simplifying food regulations to suit small-scale, community-led initiatives, and embedding mātauranga Māori in food and well-being strategies. Recognising and resourcing kaumatua as knowledge holders and teachers is another critical intervention point, alongside supporting rangatahi participation through education, employment, and leadership pathways in the food system.



## 6.5.2 Policy Levers: Tiered Framework

Taking into consideration the kōrero from both the interviews and the community voices from the workshop, we have structured the community capability policy levers into three interconnected tiers as a way to understand where interventions can be made. Each tier represents a different level of influence, from immediate whānau-centred action through to wider structural transformation.

- 1. Tier 1: Immediate and Practical Interventions** – focused on whānau and hāpori solutions that can be actioned quickly, building confidence, knowledge, and access.
- 2. Tier 2: System Enablers** – structural support that creates the conditions for kai systems to thrive, including resourcing, education, and infrastructure.
- 3. Tier 3: Transformational Shifts** – long-term changes to governance, law, and social systems that restore tino rangatiratanga and re-indigenise food systems.

### 6.5.2.1 Tier One: Immediate/Tangible

Interventions at this level focus on addressing pressing issues of food insecurity, overcrowding, and lack of access to fresh kai.

#### Community Access to Kai

Support whānau with immediate barriers such as limited land, time, and overcrowded housing

*“In Tāmaki we lack land, we lack knowledge, we lack time, but we have a lot of people... the positive is that you’ll always have people there to help you if you want it. The negative is that there’s more mouths to feed.”*

#### Fresh Kai Distribution

Reduce food waste and redirect surplus from farms.

*“You have a lot of people moaning about not having money, not having food, not having access to fresh, clean kai. But there’s farms with it rotting in there because there’s no one to pick it.”*

#### Household and Backyard Kai Options:

Policies must consider space constraints.

*“Most people had to choose between a garden or a tramp or a barbecue table or a shed.”*

### 6.5.2.2 Tier Two: Intermediate/Structural

These interventions reshape systems of production and distribution by embedding Māori knowledge, governance, and collective action.

#### Local Food Systems

Invest in community gardens, marae-based kai initiatives, and ongoing collective production

*“there’s not really groups of people or community groups or anything that are keen on doing any continuous gardening, which is probably what shapes the food systems up here, because you have a lot of people moaning about not having money, not having food, not having access to fresh, clean Kai.”*

#### Whānau-centred Approaches

Support frameworks like Hua Parakore.

*“Hua Parakore goes deeper than anything else, because you’ve got to follow the whakapapa of the seed, the soil, the manure you use, the hay that the horse ate... you’ve got to know the whakapapa of everything.”*

### 6.5.2.3 Tier Three: Long-term/Transformational

At this level, interventions transform not only food systems but cultural values and the way kai is celebrated and sustained intergenerationally.

#### Kai as Celebration and Identity

Re-establish traditions of collective food celebration.

*“Kai needs to be celebrated and worked on every day but as a whānau... that’s the goal of the hākari atamira, and that’s what our ancestors used to do, build these so that we could celebrate the successes of our kai systems and show off.”*

#### Whānau-centred Approaches

Normalise kai cultivation as daily practice and collective responsibility, positioning food not only as survival but as cultural pride and abundance.

#### Transformational Governance

Position Māori worldviews and mana motuhake at the heart of food policy, embedding long-term commitments to whenua, whakapapa, and well-being.

## 6.5.3 Potential Interventions Identified in the Community Workshop

- Creating more local markets and food exchanges
- Designing food and activity programmes around what whānau value and want
- Gathering, documenting family recipes and kai stories
- Find out what family’s want to eat/do
- Offering maramataka aligned growing and cooking programmes
- Building frameworks co-designed WITH communities, not for them
- Strengthening belonging through connections to whenua
- Hosting street activations such as kai is kōrero and ‘love food, hate waste’ events
- Paying kaumatua to run wānanga on mātauranga kai
- Supporting community led umu, hangi pits as sites of learning and sharing

Prioritising these community-led, culturally-informed solutions offers a path to genuine food security and enhanced well-being.

## 6.6 Major Policy Opportunities

Build local capacity (coalitions, networks, skills, knowledge, resources) for collective impact in two main areas:

- Greater local ability and scale to undertake actions within local food systems
- Stronger and cohesive local voice and pressure for policies and resource flows for healthier local food systems

## 6.7 Community Capacity: Key Takeaways

- ✓ **Centrality of Indigenous Approaches:** Building community capacity in South Auckland must be led by the community itself, with indigenous approaches at the forefront. These approaches are rooted in a deep, interconnected understanding of land (whenua), people, and traditional practices, which fosters self-reliance, resilience, and collective strength.
- ✓ **Foundation for Local Food Systems:** Community capacity is an essential foundation for developing successful and sustainable local food systems. A community's ability to engage in collective action is a powerful support for the growth and cooperation of initiatives like community gardens.
- ✓ **Focus on Holistic Well-being:** The benefits of building community capacity extend beyond food security to encompass holistic well-being. This includes improved physical health from access to traditional diets, enhanced mental and spiritual benefits from connecting to the land, and stronger social cohesion (whanaungatanga) through collective work.
- ✓ **Reclaiming Knowledge and Practice:** A key focus is the reactivation of Mātauranga Māori (traditional knowledge) related to food, such as Hua Parakore principles for pure food cultivation and the use of Maramataka (the Māori lunar calendar). Community gardens and marae serve as intergenerational hubs for sharing and practicing this knowledge.
- ✓ **Collective Action and Reciprocity:** Community capacity emphasises collective action, whanaungatanga (kinship), and manaakitanga (caring for others). Initiatives like the Kai Ika project, where fish heads and frames are shared throughout the community, exemplify tikanga-based models of reciprocity and care that strengthen community bonds.
- ✓ **Need for Supportive Regulation and Investment:** For community capacity to flourish, supportive policies are crucial. This includes enabling secure access to land for māra kai (food gardens), simplifying food regulations for small-scale community initiatives, and securing Council investment to help individual projects collaborate and build a more sustainable local food system.
- ✓ **Aspirations for a Sustainable Future:** The vision for the future involves making sustainable practices like seed saving and composting a normal part of daily life for whānau. It also includes reviving traditions that celebrate food and successful harvests, positioning kai not just as sustenance but as a source of cultural pride and identity.
- ✓ **Data Gaps on Community Initiatives:** While it is known that a large number of community gardens exist in South Auckland, the sources note a significant lack of data on what they produce, how much they produce, or who receives the produce. Gathering this data is identified as an important step to build upon these existing community assets.

## 7. Theme 3: Household Economics

### 7.1 Introduction

Household economics profoundly shape food security and overall well-being, by directly influencing access to nutritious food and daily lifestyle choices. A significant barrier is the high cost of healthy food, which frequently forces families to opt for cheaper, less nutritious alternatives. The severe cost of living crisis renders essential healthy items unaffordable for many.

The prevailing economic model, centred on mass production and consumption, prioritises profit over community health outcomes. This is exemplified by the duopoly of supermarkets, which can dictate prices, and are reaping more than \$1 million in excess profits per day. Practices like 'shrinkflation,' where product sizes are reduced while prices remain constant, effectively act as price increases for consumers.

For many households, the struggle to cover basic living expenses, such as rent (which can be \$600-\$700 for a two-bedroom house), necessitates working long hours or multiple jobs, thereby minimising time available for preparing healthy meals or engaging in food-growing activities. This reliance on convenient, inexpensive fast food and takeaways is exacerbated by their widespread availability and affordability, especially in vulnerable areas, leading to a "free for all sugar factory" environment. Certain areas, such as Ōtara, lack supermarkets, forcing residents to depend on more costly dairies or incur significant travel expenses, intensifying their financial burden. Imported foods make up a large percentage of the diet, because their overseas manufacturing, benefiting from economies of scale and lower wages, makes them cheaper than locally produced goods.

The cultural importance of certain foods, like corned beef, also presents an economic challenge. Despite its high cost and less healthy profile, families continue to purchase it for cultural events, leading to exploitation by businesses that leverage this demand. The high prices have even instigated



a shift in traditional practices, with some communities now using canned fish instead of corned beef for certain events due to affordability.

The ramifications of these economic realities are profound, resulting in increased consumption of unhealthy, ultra-processed foods, which contributes to rising rates of obesity and diet-related illnesses. While food banks offer immediate assistance, they can foster a dependency model, further impacting long-term health and well-being. Furthermore, a stigma associated with accepting free food can deter those most in need from accessing available support. Ultimately, household economic struggles not only compromise food security but also diminish the physical and mental well-being of individuals and communities, perpetuating a cycle of disadvantage.

## 7.2 Sub-model

### Explanation of the Sub-model

The ability to feed all members of a household is dependent on household income and the affordability of food. It is also driven by the economic climate and cost of housing that limits the amount of income available for purchasing food. Limited income creates a financial strain that can lead to family members working multiple jobs and/or students leaving school early to help provide for their families. The effects of working more or longer include time pressures that inhibit food preparation leading to increased access to cheap, convenient fast foods.

The high cost of healthy food, combined with low incomes, multiple jobs and the pressures of modern life mean many people have lost the knowledge of how to grow and cook food well. This has increased the reliance on external food sources – supermarkets and fast-food outlets.

In addition, the long hours working leaves little time for food preparation leading to a ‘demand for cheap, convenient fast food’, a diet that, over time, contributes to poor health, further limiting any ability to obtain higher paying jobs and thereby improving household economics.

### Feedback Loops

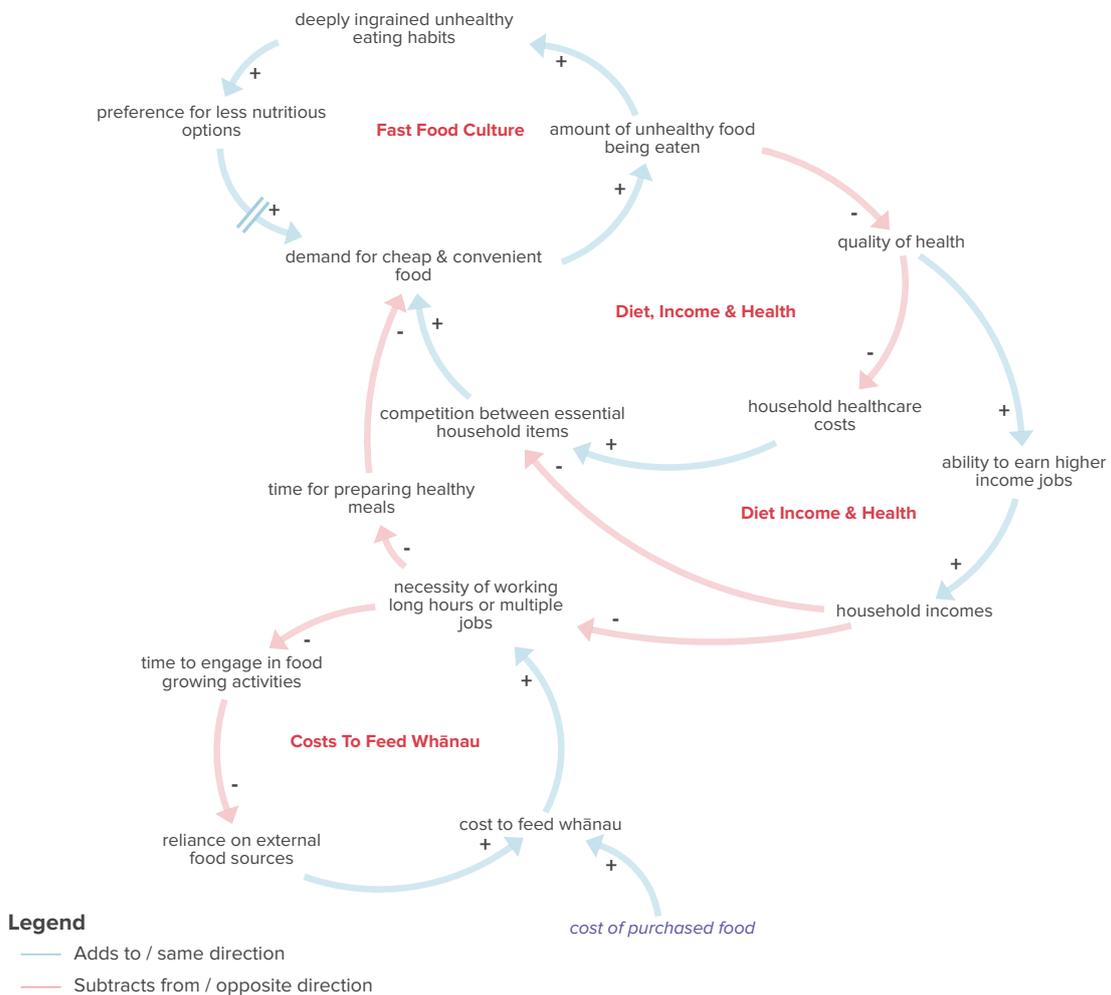
**Cost to Feed Whānau:** Driven by the high cost of purchased food whānau are forced to work long hours and/or multiple jobs to make ends meet. As a result there is little time to engage in food growing activities necessitating a reliance on external food sources such as supermarkets and dairies

**Diet, Income & Health:** For those on low incomes there is competition between essential household items such as power, rent and food. This drives a reliance on cheap and convenient food, which affects health and the ability to obtain higher income work, It also increases healthcare costs, further increasing the demands on a limited household budget keep families in a cycle of low income and limited choices.

## 7.3 Areas of Focus

Discussions with the community highlighted key areas of focus within the theme of Household Economics:

- Working long hours, multiple jobs, to afford food
- Greater use of food banks
- Family stress
- Families choosing cheaper food, missing out on food
- Children missing out on breakfast
- Long hours and multiple jobs leaves no time for cooking



## 7.4 Illustrative Data

### 7.4.1 Qualitative Data

#### Families Choosing Cheaper Food

“Bread has replaced our veggies. Bread, rice, all the starchy kai. And cheaper. Yeah, cheaper. Yeah, way cheaper.” (FS\_6)

#### People Buying Fast Food Because it's Cheaper

“It's easier to buy high sugar, high carb food, than it is to buy natural kai. Your kai, that is your pumpkins and your potatoes and your veggies, your meats, but you can understand, if you can go and get a feed at a takeaway, and it's cheaper to purchase that than it is to grow your own kai.” (FS\_10)

#### Loss of Knowledge and Skills about Growing and Cooking Food

“Cost of Kai. Only knowing the veggie shop or the supermarket, lack of knowledge around growing their own kai and the purpose of, you know, collecting your seeds for the next season.” (FS\_6)

#### Working Long Hours, Multiple Jobs to Afford Food

“Even those people that make a lot, you know, we're not well, we're not rich, we're not, we get by, but we've, in the last year and a half, felt the bite, since COVID, the bite of the cost of living.” (FS\_10)

“People are working, but they're just trying to afford to get into a house and then they work long hours. You got other compounding factors into that too.” (FS\_10)

#### Increased Financial Strain and Family Stress

“The cost of living has skyrocketed. You know, even for a two-bedroom house, 6- \$700 for a whare or 500 to 600 for a two-bedroom whare and it's not saying that our people aren't working. They're working, but they're just trying to afford to get into a house and then they work long hours.” (FS\_10)

“Lots of people whose mortgage right, just, you know, like finished mortgage right? They were 2% all of a sudden become eight. It just, yeah. Lots of people in a bad situation, yeah.” (FS\_13)

“People are struggling, everyone is struggling, everyone.” (FS\_13)

#### Greater Use of Food Banks

“Lots of people in a bad situation ... I have at the moment, I have 10 staff, most of them financial mentors, and I have two social supermarket coordinators.” (FS\_13)

#### Stigma and Shame

“Even at mahi, there's some of our whānau that needed kai packs, but they didn't want to ask or didn't tell anyone. So, it's removing that whakama [shyness] around that, yeah, yeah, which is sad ... Taking free Kai is like a shameful kind of persona on it as well, which is, I don't know where that's come from, because koha is a natural and normal value that we have.” (FS\_10)

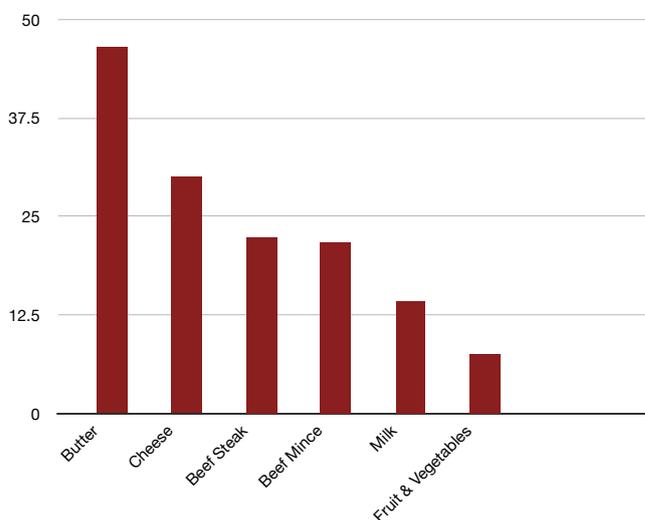
#### Age of Inconvenience

“We are always looking for the easy option, which then makes our food even unhealthy, the impacts of that. So, seeing that around going back to reclaiming our own hauora and own well-being, by growing our kai and you see the way that the houses are designed these days.” (FS\_10)

### 7.4.2 Quantitative Data

The rising price of food over the last 12 months is having a significant effect on household economics. With food price rises over the last 12 months ranging from 46.5% for butter to 7.6% for fruit and vegetables<sup>16</sup>. In contrast those on the minimum wage, that is those who are most vulnerable to food insecurity saw their rate rise from \$23.15 to \$23.5 per hour. An increase of 1.5%. With annual inflation to April 2025 being 2.5% this is a decrease, and the worker on the minimum wage being worse off cumulatively to the tune of \$2,438<sup>17</sup>.

Annual Food Price Rises to June 2025

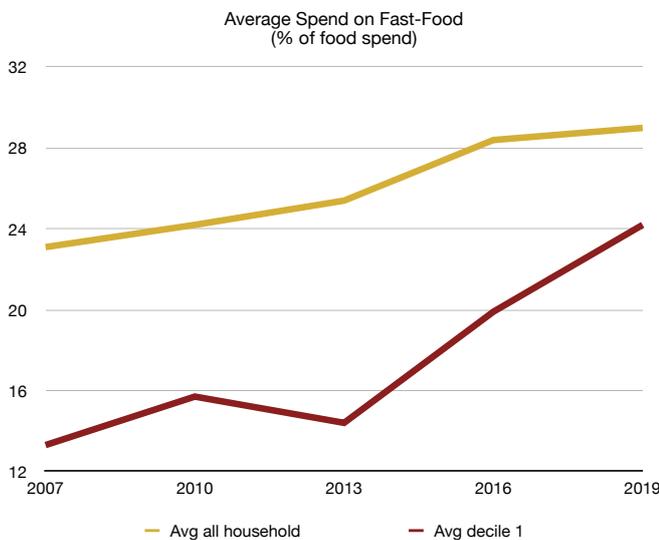
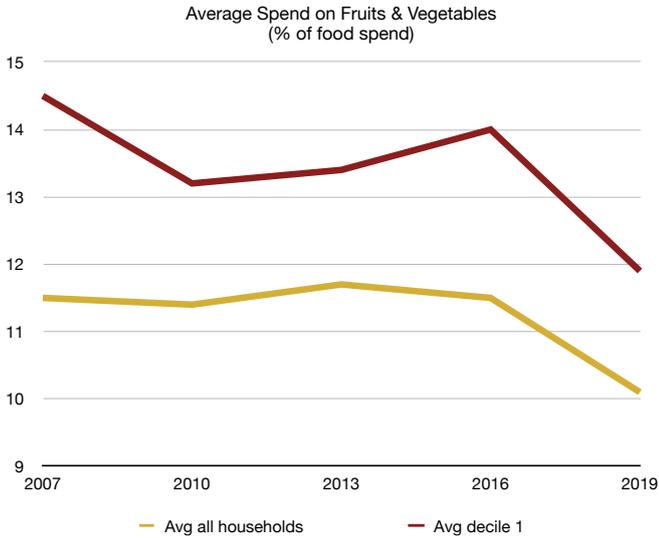


Source: Trading Economics: New Zealand Food Inflation (<https://tradingeconomics.com/new-zealand/food-inflation>)

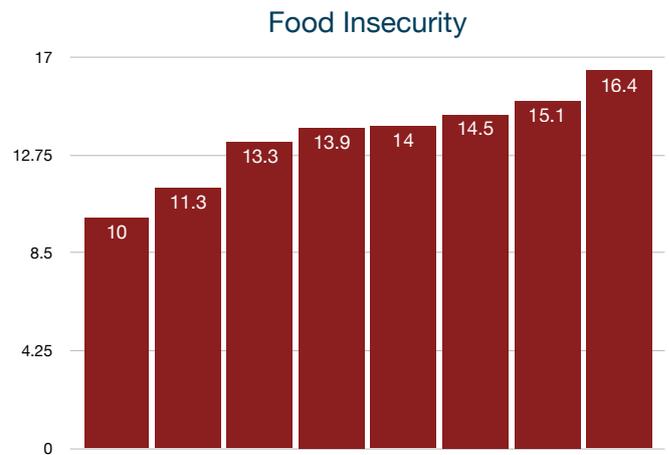
<sup>16</sup> Trading Economics (2025) <https://tradingeconomics.com/new-zealand/food-inflation>

<sup>17</sup> New Zealand Council of Trade Unions (NZCTU) (2025). Inflation data confirms real terms minimum wage cut. (<https://union.org.nz/inflation-data-confirms-real-terms-minimum-wage-cut/>)

The rising price of food, especially since 2016, when food prices started to rise markedly, is reflected in the food choices people are making. Between 2007 and 2019 the average household spent less (12.5%) of their food budget on fruit and vegetables, while deciles 1 households spent 18% less. In contrast all households increased their expenditure on fast-food. During the same 12-year period the average household increased the percentage of their food budget on fast-food by 25.6%, while decile 1 households increased their spend by 81.3%<sup>18</sup>.



Food insecurity represents a critical manifestation of economic deprivation, and its prevalence in New Zealand has been on an upward trend. The overall rate of food insecurity in New Zealand increased from 10 percent in 2014-2016 to 16.4 percent in 2020-2023<sup>19</sup>. This worsening trend is particularly concerning given that global food insecurity rates have shown improvement in many comparable countries. The impact of food insecurity is acutely felt by children. More than one in five households with children under 15 reported that food ran out “often or sometimes” in 2022-23, an increase from 14 percent in 2022. The ethnic disparities in food insecurity are even more alarming: 40 percent of Pacific households with children reported food running out “often or sometimes,” closely followed by Māori households at 35.1 percent<sup>20</sup>.



Source: United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation(2024) State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (<https://www.fao.org/interactive/hunger-map/en/>)

### Food Insecurity in Households With Children

Percentage of households where food runs out “often” or “sometimes”

**40%**  
Pacific Households

**35.1%**  
Māori Households

**20%+**  
All households with Children

Food insecurity is a direct consequence of financial strain, with Pacific and Māori whānau facing alarming rates of food running out

Source: Salvation Army (2024) State of the Nation 2024

18 Berl (2021). Nutritious food increasingly unaffordable for many. (<https://berl.co.nz/economic-insights/nutritious-food-increasingly-unaffordable-many>)

19 <https://thespinoff.co.nz/kai/31-07-2024/around-the-world-food-insecurity-is-improving-in-new-zealand-its-getting-worse>

20 Salvation Army (2024) State of the Nation 2024

## 7.5 Policy Levers and Intervention Points

### 7.5.1 Policy Map

Finding effective and realistic policy leavers to improve household economics is difficult at a regional and local level. The biggest levers, by far, are those that affect incomes and food costs. These can only be addressed at a national level. While there are some things that can be done, and these will be discussed below, they will have a much smaller impact. While the policies discussed below are worth pursuing they should not be seen as alternatives to tackling the root causes found in low incomes and high food costs.

**Policy Area: Food Literacy**

**Overview:**

- Many families resort to fast food because of price and convenience and are unaware of the significant health impact of the diet that will over the long-term have a considerable effect upon their whānau.

**Questions:**

- What are the best mechanisms for increasing food literacy focusing on the health effects of different patterns of food consumption?
- What can the Council do to ensure that negative effects of fast food consumption are widely known?

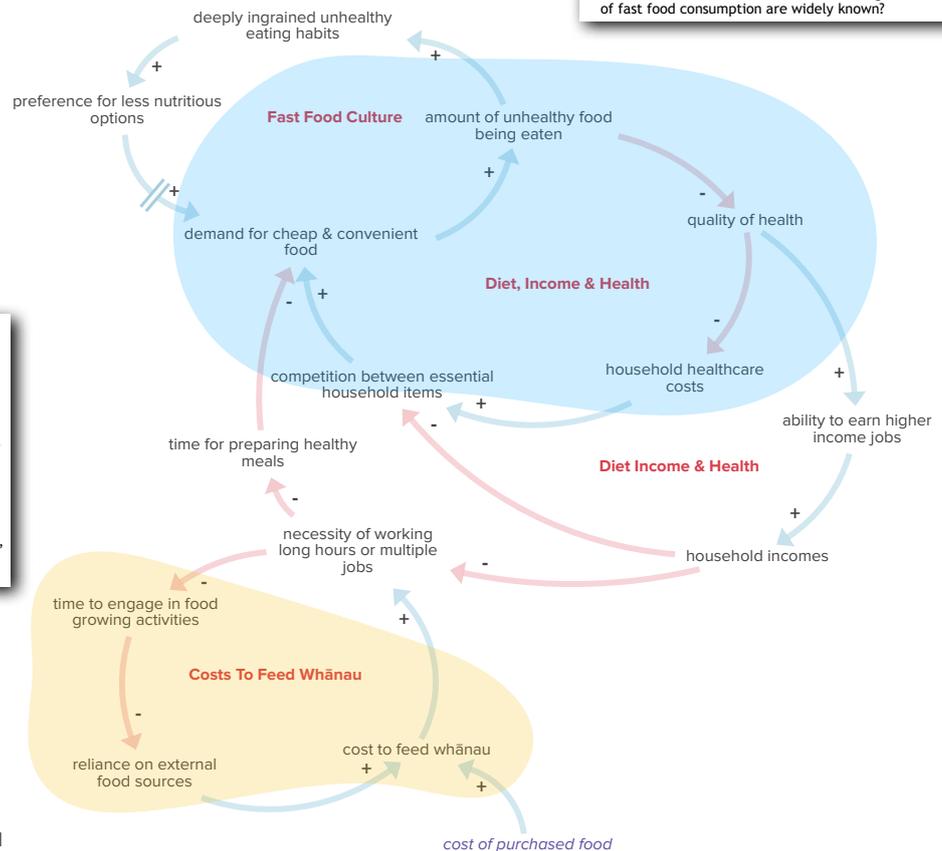
**Policy Area: Knowledge & Skills**

**Overview:**

- As outlined in the map the high cost of food, combined with low incomes means there is competition between essential household items - food has to compete with rent and power. The result is long hours and/or multiple jobs. This is one of the major factors underlying the loss of knowledge of how to grow, prepare and cook food, leading to an almost total reliance of food retailers.

**Questions:**

- What support can Council provide to community support and education to increase levels of knowledge and skills, with the specific aim of increasing the amount of food cooked at home.



**Legend**

- Adds to / same direction
- Subtracts from / opposite direction

## 7.5.2 Potential Interventions Identified in the Community Workshop

- Reverse the loss of knowledge and skills
- 'Mutual aid' system for food and more
- Fruit trees on berms
- Fund start-ups for local caterers
- Sugar tax
- Tax breaks for wholefoods and healthy fast foods
- Remove GST on fruit and vegetables
- Rent controls
- Longer term rentals
- Schools as food culture hubs – food through a cultural lens
- Normalising healthy food
- Localised jobs
- Communal living
- More than gardening – urban farming
- Living wage – Universal Basic Income
- Tax on ultra-processed foods
- Scaling current grassroots initiatives

## 7.6 Major Policy Opportunities

Build a strong and cohesive local voice to advocate for policy changes to reduce household poverty and the high cost of healthy food.

## 7.7 Household Economics: Key Takeaways

- ✓ **High Cost of Healthy Food:** A central theme is that the high cost of healthy food is a significant barrier for households, forcing families to choose cheaper, less nutritious, and starchy alternatives like bread and rice over vegetables. The cost of living crisis makes essential healthy items unaffordable, with examples like a block of butter costing up to \$10.
- ✓ **Low Incomes and Competing Expenses:** Household economics are profoundly shaped by the struggle to cover basic living costs, particularly high rent. This financial strain forces people to work long hours or multiple jobs just to afford housing, leaving limited funds for nutritious food.
- ✓ **Time Scarcity and Convenience:** The necessity of working long hours means families have very little time available for preparing healthy meals or engaging in food-growing activities. This time pressure leads to a heavy reliance on convenient, inexpensive fast food and takeaways.
- ✓ **Prevalence of Unhealthy Food Options:** The widespread availability and affordability of fast food creates what is described as a "free for all sugar factory" environment. It's often cheaper and easier to buy a takeaway meal than to purchase the ingredients to grow or cook a healthy one.
- ✓ **Negative Health and Income Cycle:** The economic pressures lead to a diet high in sugar and carbohydrates, contributing to obesity and diet-related illnesses. This can create a reinforcing cycle where poor health negatively affects a person's ability to work and earn a higher income, further worsening their economic situation.
- ✓ **Loss of Knowledge and Skills:** The combination of low incomes, multiple jobs, and the pressures of modern life has led to a decline in knowledge about how to grow and cook food. This increases a household's reliance on external food sources like supermarkets and fast-food outlets.
- ✓ **Increased Use of Food Banks and Stigma:** As a result of financial hardship, there is a greater use of food banks. However, this can foster dependency, and there is often a stigma or shame (whakama) associated with accepting free food, which can deter people in need from seeking help.
- ✓ **Worsening Food Insecurity Data:** Quantitative data shows a clear trend of rising food insecurity, with food prices increasing significantly faster than the minimum wage. This is reflected in household spending, which has shifted away from fruit and vegetables and towards fast food. The impact is most severe for Māori and Pacific households with children.

## 8. Theme 4: Industrial Food Systems

### 8.1 Introduction

Almost all food businesses are purely for-profit, without explicit social or environmental purposes. The most profitable part of the food system is what we are calling the industrial food systems which produce and sell mainly ultra-processed foods. This includes supermarkets (most of the centre of supermarkets is for UPFs), fast food outlets, and local dairies. Best estimates are that UPFs make up about half the diet of New Zealanders and these are the foods linked to obesity, chronic diseases, and poor mental health.

The other feature of the for-profit, industrial food systems is that if people cannot afford to pay for their food, they fall outside the system. So while the system takes no responsibility for food insecurity, it does have a significant impact on food security and the well-being of communities in South Auckland, largely due to the high cost of healthy food. This challenge stems from various causes rooted in market structures, supply dynamics, and economic barriers.

A major factor contributing to the high cost of healthy food is the duopoly of supermarkets, which allows them to control prices and limit competition. While supermarkets themselves operate on relatively small profit margins (around 3%), they primarily set the prices for food products, making up the biggest chunk of the cost, and they do make more than \$1 million a day in excessive profits. Practices like reducing product size while maintaining price, known as 'shrinkflation', also effectively increase costs for consumers. High rent for potential businesses offering healthy food options makes them less viable, especially in high-deprivation areas, and wage increases in manufacturing and supply chains further drive-up food prices.

The primary focus of the food industry is to maximise financial returns to its owners and shareholders and as a result export markets which can return higher profits often take priority over local supply for products, leading to local shortages and a need for imports. This usually results in higher prices. Seasonal availability causes significant price fluctuations for produce, making out-of-season items very expensive. Additionally, housing developments on prime farmland reduce agricultural land, leading to less local produce and higher prices. Despite New Zealand being a major food producer, it imports a large portion of food, often because it is cheaper to manufacture overseas due to larger scale and lower wages.



Accessibility further compounds the issue. There is a saturation of fast-food outlets in vulnerable areas, with examples like two KFCs on Massey Road within residential blocks, making unhealthy options easily and cheaply available. The lack of supermarkets in certain areas, such as Ōtara, forces residents to rely on more expensive dairies and takeaways or incur significant travel costs to access larger stores. Dairies often exploit this by charging significantly higher prices, sometimes double or triple supermarket rates. This convenience of readily available, unhealthy options sometimes leads to reliance on simple, less nutritious choices.

The consequences of this food industry landscape are severe for well-being. Families are often forced to choose cheaper, less nutritious options, leading to increased consumption of ultra-processed foods. This contributes to a rise in obesity and diet-related diseases. Families face significant financial strain and stress trying to afford food, particularly healthy options. This, coupled with urbanisation and a preference for convenience, fosters a disconnect from traditional food practices and land among younger generations, impacting overall well-being and identity. Lastly, while intended to help, food banks can inadvertently create a dependency model, further impacting health outcomes. This highlights an unbalanced economic model that prioritises mass production and consumption for profit over community health and well-being.

## 8.2 Sub-model

### Explanation of The Sub-model

The food industry is dominated by large multinational corporations whose chief aim is centred on achieving profitability through its mass production of food products. These profits are invested into savvy marketing of food products to consumers and in the hyper-availability of fast-food outlets. Effective marketing and omnipresence of food outlet fuels demand driving down the cost and supporting the convenience of food. Inadvertently, low cost and convenience amplifies accessibility, expenditure and opportunity for consumption, contributing to industry profit, time-savings in meal preparation and competition for household essentials. (This is supported by Wood et al (2024)<sup>21</sup> and Clark et al (in press))<sup>22</sup>

As powerful marketing creates a fast-food culture impacting critical domains such as Health and Income by driving consumption for less nutritious foods. The resulting poor health diminishes employment capability and income affecting affordability of healthy food.

### Feedback Loops

**Profitability and Fast-Food Outlets:** This loop begins with a demand for cheap, convenient fast food, which reduces local food production and increases reliance on external sources. This leads to higher expenditure on retail food, boosting profitability, which in turn fuels marketing investment, further increasing demand for fast food.

## 8.3 Areas of Focus

The effects of the food industry on the current food system in South Auckland are wide-ranging, particularly in the environmental and economic domains. Industrial activities have led to environmental degradation, such as pollution of waterways (awa), which affects traditional food sources like eels. Additionally, the conversion of fertile farmland into

housing and tree plantations reduces local food production, contributing to a loss of cultural knowledge and connection to the land (whenua). This shift undermines both food sovereignty and environmental sustainability.

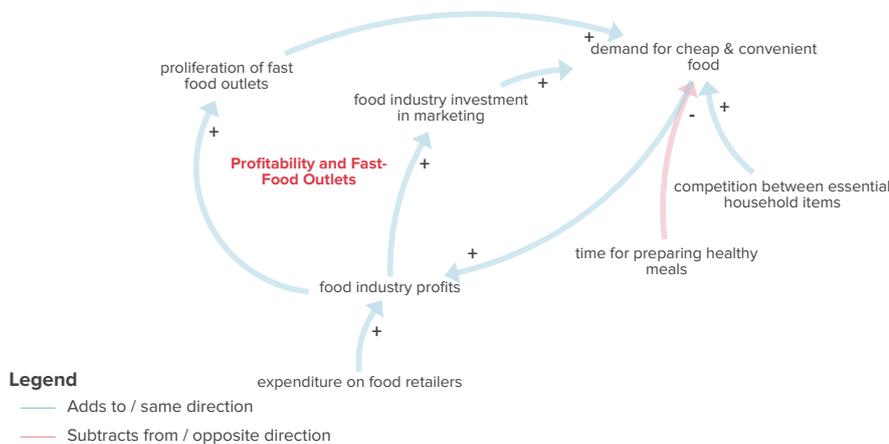
Economically, the high cost of healthy food is a major concern. This is driven by supermarket duopoly, price gouging, and a food system prioritising shareholder profits over community well-being. Local dairies often charge significantly more than supermarkets, and some communities lack access to affordable food retailers altogether. These structural issues, compounded by climate change and global supply chains, force many residents to opt for cheaper, less nutritious food, exacerbating health inequalities.

Socially, the industrial food system relegates people to passive consumer roles, distancing them from food production and traditional practices. The dominance of fast-food outlets – open longer and more accessible than healthier options – encourages poor dietary habits. This is especially problematic for large families and those with limited cooking facilities, contributing to rising rates of chronic illnesses like type 2 diabetes.

Finally, the system favours large-scale industrial agriculture, leaving little room for small growers. High input costs and urban development pressures make it difficult for small-scale farming to thrive, leading to nutrient-depleted soils and reduced food diversity. Meanwhile, significant amounts of edible food are wasted due to aesthetic standards, with no policies in place to redirect surplus to those in need, highlighting inefficiencies and missed opportunities for community support.

Discussions with the community (talanoa workshop) highlighted key areas of focus within the theme of Food Industry:

- To counter the prevailing challenges imposed by the food industry, focussing on co-creating local trade structures with local producers and growers through existing and new farmers' type markets would be helpful (Scaling grassroots production)



21 Wood, B., Garton, K., Milsom, P., Baker, P., Anastasiou, K., Clark, J., ... & Sacks, G. (2025). Using a systems thinking approach to map the global rise of ultra-processed foods in population diets. *Obesity Reviews*, 26(4), e13877. DOI: 10.1111/obr.13877

22 Clark J, Swinburn B, Wood B et al. (in press) How does the ultra-processed food industry drive consumption through product design and marketing? Mapping a complex commercial system according to expert mental models and evidence review.

- Community programmes focussed on sharing of traditional migrant and Indigenous knowledges and stories of cultural relevance of food practices from growing to cooking
- Community also raised the need for land for growing and funding for locally grown food. This is to be supported with easier access to growing/production permits and licences and likely policy changes (Co-operative models that are community values based).

## 8.4 Illustrative Data

### 8.4.1 Qualitative Data

The local food environment in South Auckland is dominated by unhealthy fast-food outlets and, in some areas, a lack of healthy food outlets. These are referred to as food swamps and food deserts respectively and were commented on by community members. The lack of control that a community has over the types of food outlets in their neighbourhood is a real challenge, especially for schools.

#### Too many unhealthy food outlets

*“For example, just on Massey road, we have two KFC placed together, and there are only two residential houses apart, and I feel that we are a target of major fast food companies, because it’s not that our people are stupid or anything, but they know that our people are likely to buy these because it’s a lot cheaper they can sort of buy fresh fruit and vegetables.”*

#### Lack of healthy food outlets

*“It just makes no sense for there not to be a supermarket there where people can access food straight away, and they’re not having to go to, you know, some of these dodgy shops that just charge crazy prices.”*

#### Lack of community control over local food environments

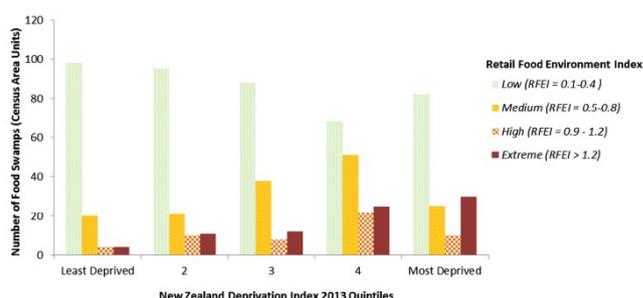
*“We can’t control what happens across the road at the local dairy. We, uh except during the day, you know, not letting students out to go to the dairy during break times. So that’s a school policy which has always been that way. But before and after school, it’s a free for all sugar factory.”*

### 8.4.2 Quantitative Data

The food system in New Zealand is failing to provide nutritious and affordable food to a large number of New Zealanders. This is not because the country is not producing enough food, but because the drivers of the food industry prioritise financial gain for the industry, rather than the health and well-being of New Zealanders. Most of the food produced in New Zealand is shipped to overseas markets. Furthermore, the price New Zealanders have to pay for food that is distributed locally is heavily influenced by the price producers get in those overseas markets. The result is that around 10% of the population is food insecure<sup>23</sup>.

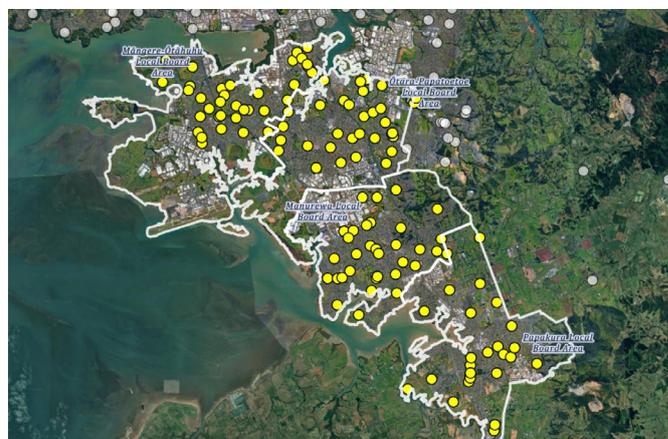
In addition, of the food that is destined for local markets, around 20-40% is discarded before it even reaches the shelves of food retail outlets. Over 100,000 tonnes of perfectly edible food is wasted each year. That equates to around \$1,510 per household. 100,000 tonnes of food that used energy, fertilisers and emitted CO<sub>2</sub> greenhouse gases in the production process<sup>24</sup>.

Food swamps with excessive numbers of unhealthy food outlets are heavily concentrated in the poorer neighbourhoods. This is not accidental; it is the result of the industrial food system deliberately exploiting the most vulnerable communities who are struggling with the dollar cost and time cost of maintaining a healthy diet. They offer cheap, convenient food which leads to the vicious cycles of getting habituated to or ‘hooked on’ unhealthy food and this amplifies health impacts like obesity and diabetes.



The graph shows that in the most deprived areas, a higher Retail food environment index indicates a higher relative availability of unhealthy food outlets<sup>25</sup>.

Outdoor advertising for unhealthy food is also problematic because it perpetuates the normalisation of unhealthy food. The map shows the location of the 103 schools in the four board areas in South Auckland. A 500m radius around each school. These could be designated ‘Healthy School Food Zones’ and mean that unhealthy food advertising would not be permitted within those zones. This would require a by-law authority for Council to enact this restriction and it would include all street-facing outdoor advertising, including billboards, bus stops, and shop fronts.



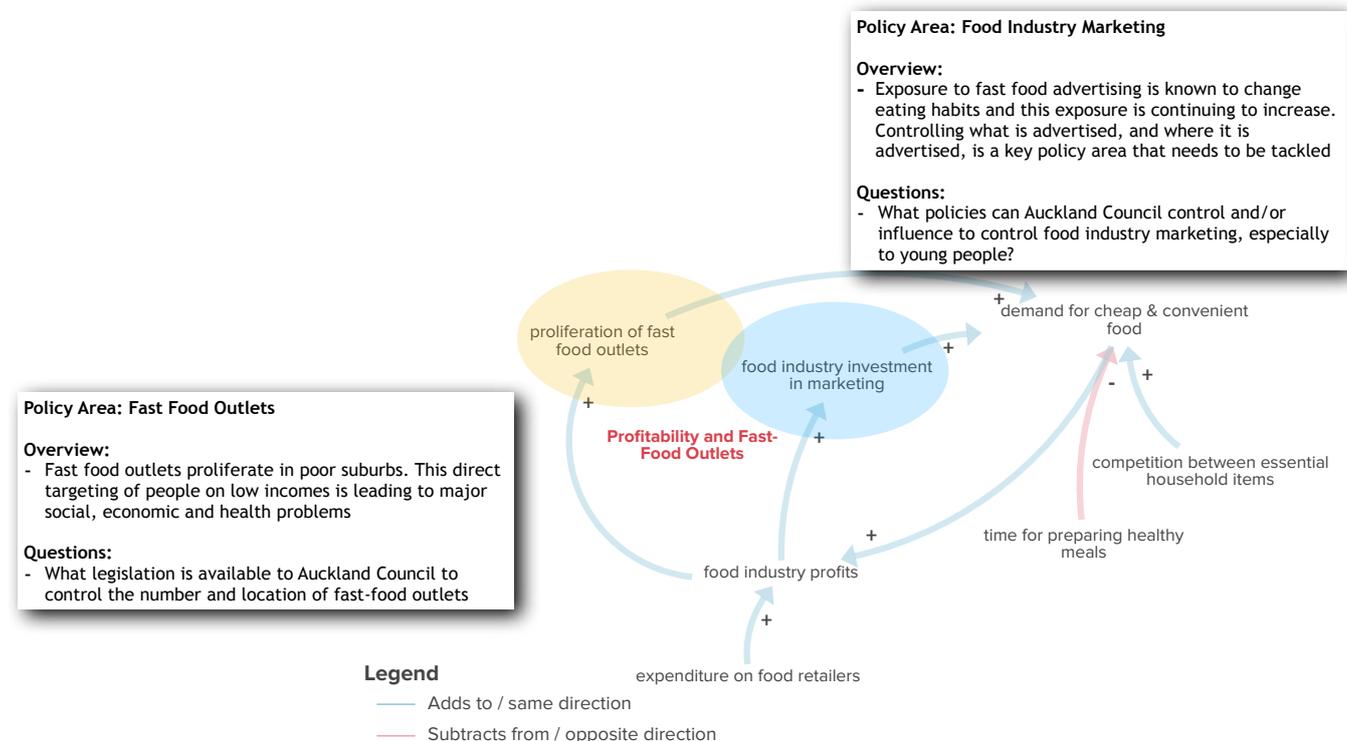
23 Foundation North (2023). Food Sovereignty and Equitable Food Systems (<https://www.foundationnorth.org.nz/report/food-sovereignty-and-equitable-food-systems>)

24 Deloitte (2025). From Waste To worth: Quantifying the social benefit delivered by food rescue agencies. (<https://www.deloitte.com/nz/en/services/audit-assurance/blogs/from-waste-to-worth-new-zealand-2025.html>)

25 Sushil Z, Vandevijvere S, Exeter DJ, Swinburn B. (2017) Food swamps by area socioeconomic deprivation in New Zealand: a national study. Int J Public Health 62:869-877

## 8.5 Policy Levers and Intervention Points

### 8.5.1 Policy Map



### 8.5.2 Potential Interventions Identified in the Community Workshop:

Most of the community suggestions to improve food environments focused on building the alternatives to the industrial food system, although community members did see that some local action could be directed towards influencing the industrial food system.

An idea that would support reshaping local food policy that community members agreed to is the act of resistance to corporate dominance. This was by calling to “boycott Pak’nSave”. A call to challenge the supermarket duopoly and promote alternatives.

Community-sourced ideas for policy directions to compete with the industrial food system.

- There were suggestions to promote and support local cultural food practices through “Local trading and sharing of crops”. This is to encourage community-based food exchange. A significant component linked to this idea was related to “sharing cultural food stories”, effectively preserving and celebrating food heritage. This would reintroduce traditional practices and is aligned with the Local Food Systems section above.

Grassroots Empowerment.

- “Scaling grassroots initiatives” was suggested which would “Support and expand community-led food projects”. This approach could be supported by activities that “Share resources such as street pātaka kai” promoting communal food sharing systems.

There was also mention of policy and legal support where “... legal frameworks for social enterprises...” would be helpful in advocacy for better legal support to embed social enterprises in local policy.

Community also mentioned ethical models of engagement such as “values-based co-operative models”, to encourage collective ownership and ethical business practices. This was consistent with the idea of “ethical selling and purchasing” promoting responsible consumer and vendor behaviour. Thus, the concept of youth protection was put forward in suggestions such as “controlling retail selling to minors” through regulating food sales to protect young people.

In summary, the community voices culminate in a fostering of local economic development by “creating or growing local markets”, effectively building community-driven food economies that enhance food security supported with embedded food sovereignty policies and activities.

### 8.5.3 Policy Pathways Identified in Interviews With Auckland Council

#### Unhealthy Food Outlets

Reducing the density and influencing the location (eg. around schools) of unhealthy food outlets will require central government action. Local councils currently have no authority to do so. The most likely mechanism is through a law directing councils to manage this under a by-law. Having a broad national strategy for healthy food systems makes these local by-laws more feasible; these are then seen as part of a wide, national approach.

A literature review of the academic and grey literature of legal provisions for Council to influence density and location of unhealthy food outlets found that such provisions apply in several countries (including the US, UK, Canada, Australia, and some European countries) and that they principally target fast food outlets rather than all unhealthy food outlets (such as local dairies)<sup>26</sup>.

The primary legal mechanism used internationally is through urban and spatial planning and its accompanying zoning regulations. These regulations typically have criteria for location (usually related to school) and densities (usually as a % of retail space).

Having a distributed system of jurisdiction over population health issues (such as in the UK) increases the level of the authority to make planning decisions based on health.

Common barriers to achieving these policy changes were issues with local government boundaries, legal definitions, competing priorities, perceived weakness in scientific evidence supporting fast-food bans, and limited abilities to evaluate and monitor defined outcomes of intervention.

Achieving a political willingness to create this regulatory environment will require considerable support from MPs and

public pressure. The mechanism for change is through the Resource Management Act, which is currently undergoing major changes. The new legislation will be the Natural and Built Environment Act (NBA) 2023 and the Planning Act (PA) 2023. These are due to be implemented in 2026.

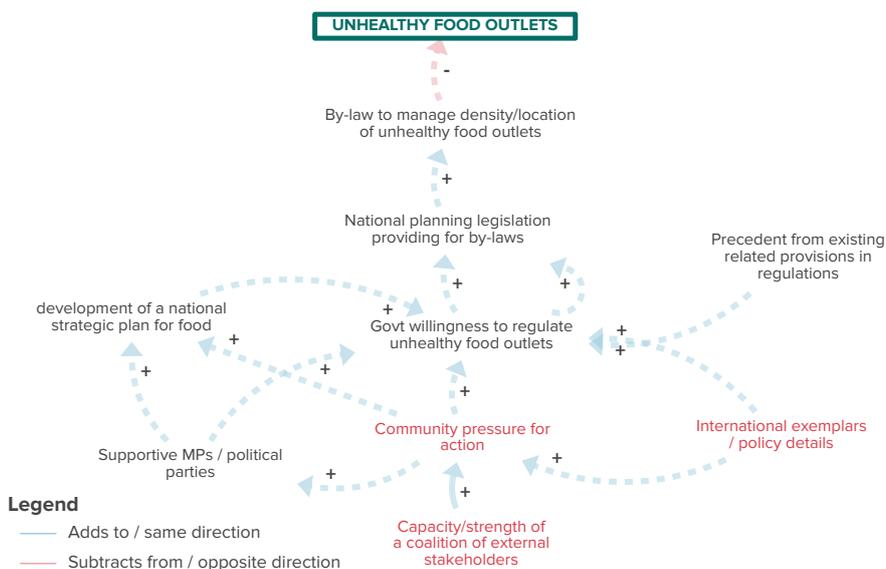
Of importance from the international literature is that the main arguments which underpinned the zoning regulations were economic and environmental, with health-based policies less likely to be passed into legislation.

The policy pathway map (below) shows that if there is substantial local capacity and strength of local stakeholders, then there are lines of influence through to a national government for a law to provide the authority to local governments with the ability to set bylaws restricting location and density of fast-food outlets. All lines are dashed showing that they are putative and not currently operational. Having supportive MPs and a national plan of action for nutrition would greatly increase the chances of getting this legislation through to enactment.

#### Outdoor Advertising of Unhealthy Food

Auckland Transport (now housed within Auckland Council) contracts out to MediaWorks all its advertising (eg. on buses and trains, bus stops and train stations). Auckland Transport Advertising Policy contains a standard that advertising will “support health and healthy lifestyle choices”. In May 2021, this Policy was updated in which a new standard to have “no advertisement of high saturated fat, salt or sugar products within 300 metres of a primary [junior] or intermediate [middle/junior high] school” was added<sup>27</sup>.

Similarly, Auckland Council’s Signs Bylaw governs the placement, quantity, size, and content of signs on both private and public land to “ensure signs protect people and the environment”. However, it relies on the voluntary self-regulation of the industry body the Advertising Standards Authority regarding permissible advertising.



26 Niha R. Global policy approaches to fast-food outlet regulation: A literature review of international government strategies. 2025

27 Kneller, K., Garton, K., Exeter, D. J., & Egli, V. (2024). Mapping the extent of unhealthy food advertising around schools in Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland. *Kōtuitui: New Zealand Journal of Social Sciences Online*, 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1177083X.2024.2344510>

## 8.6 Major Policy Opportunities

There are currently no drivers for constraining the industrial food system through reductions in fast food outlets and restricting unhealthy food marketing to children. These would need to be largely developed through national and local policies. These would need new policies (eg for restricting fast-food outlet locations) or amending existing policies (eg for advertising on Auckland Transport assets. Collective community support will be needed for the following policies:

- Legislate for Council by-laws to limit the density and locations of fast-food outlets
- Ensure Auckland Transport contracts for advertising exclude unhealthy foods
- Explore regulatory options for Auckland Council to restrict unhealthy food outdoor ads within 500m of schools.

## 8.7 Industrial Food Systems: Key Takeaways

- ✓ **Profit-Driven Model Over Community Health:** The industrial food system is primarily driven by a model that prioritises financial returns for owners and shareholders over the health and well-being of communities. This leads to mass production and consumption focused on profit, making healthy food less accessible and more expensive while promoting unhealthy options.
- ✓ **Supermarket Duopoly and High Food Costs:** A major factor contributing to the high cost of healthy food is the supermarket duopoly, which controls prices and limits competition. Practices like 'shrinkflation' (reducing product size while maintaining the price) also effectively increase costs for consumers.
- ✓ **Export Priority and Reliance on Imports:** The food industry prioritises export markets that offer higher profits, which can lead to local shortages, price fluctuations, and a need for imports. Despite being a major food producer, New Zealand imports a significant amount of food, often because it is cheaper to manufacture overseas.
- ✓ **Saturation of Unhealthy Food Outlets:** Communities in South Auckland face a saturation of fast-food outlets, making unhealthy options cheap, convenient, and easily accessible. It is a deliberate marketing strategy to exploit the vulnerabilities of communities in poorer neighbourhoods. This contrasts with a lack of supermarkets in some areas, which forces residents to rely on more expensive local dairies.
- ✓ **Reinforcing Cycle of Profitability and Demand:** The industrial system is characterised by a feedback loop where demand for cheap, convenient food boosts industry profits. These profits are then reinvested into marketing and increasing the proliferation of fast-food outlets, which further fuels consumer demand.
- ✓ **Barriers for Small and Local Growers:** The system favors large-scale industrial agriculture, creating significant barriers for small, local growers who struggle with high input costs and urban development pressures. Regulations, such as MPI standards, are often designed for large distributors and can hinder community initiatives from becoming commercially viable.
- ✓ **High Food Waste Despite Food Insecurity:** The system has in-built inefficiencies, with significant amounts of edible food being wasted. An estimated 100,000 tonnes of perfectly edible food are wasted annually in New Zealand before even reaching retail shelves, despite around 10% of the population being food insecure.
- ✓ **Policy and Regulatory Challenges:** A major hurdle for creating healthier food environments is that local councils in New Zealand currently have no authority to regulate the density or location of unhealthy food outlets. Such changes would require central government action, most likely through new legislation, and international experience suggests that arguments based on economic and environmental factors are often more successful than those based on health alone.

## 9. Theme 5: School Food

### 9.1 Introduction

School food systems are an important setting for addressing challenges across multiple domains, including food security, health, education, local economies and environmental sustainability. Children spend a significant portion of their time in schools and consume a substantial amount of their daily calories there, making schools influential in shaping dietary habits and promoting broader social change.

The dominant initiative in school food is the school lunches programme, Ka Ora, Ka Ako, which reaches one quarter of students, although other school food programmes and food policies can influence all schools. Successful school food programmes emphasise a holistic, systems-based, culturally grounded approach, that brings together schools, communities, community groups and health organisations.



#### 9.1.1 Key Goals and Activities

##### Alleviating Hunger at School and Reducing Family

**Financial Burdens:** Children cannot learn well on a grumbling stomach. Free school lunches give a significant relief to stretched family budgets.

##### Improving Child Nutrition and Health Outcomes:

Healthier diets and longer-term eating habits improves mental health and oral health and promotes healthy growth through childhood.

##### Reducing Barriers to School Engagement and Promoting

**Education Outcomes:** Free school lunches increase school attendance and engagement. Greater food security is related to significantly higher educational scores. Students can engage in hands-on food system education, teaching skills in growing, preparing, and sharing food, and managing food waste.

##### Strengthening Local Economies and Community-School

**Relationships:** In-school or local provision of school lunches creates local jobs and builds community connections with schools around food, including potentially involving local growers. [Note that this is not a designated primary outcome for the new low-cost Ka Ora, Ka Ako 'version 2.0' created by the National-led Coalition government].

**Promoting Environmental Sustainability:** School food programmes can be leaders in food waste reduction systems, sustainable food procurement processes, and promoting sustainable eating patterns. [Note that this is not a designated primary outcome for Ka Ora, Ka Ako].

#### 9.1.2 Challenges and Considerations

##### The Widespread Availability of Unhealthy “Competitive

**Foods”:** These include unhealthy food sold or provided through school tuck shops, canteens and lunch order systems, at school events, and in shops in close proximity to schools.

**Budgetary Pressures:** The new low-cost Ka Ora, Ka Ako food provision model (version 2.0) using a corporate provider has significantly reduced the size of the lunches (now providing only about 15% of daily energy needs) and, according to preliminary analyses, may not meet the nutritional guidelines. In addition schools and the Ministry of Education are needing to top up the funding to achieve viability.

**Resistance:** The principals of schools in the programme are very supportive of free school lunches, especially the original version 1.0, because they have seen the benefits for students. However, there is a significant minority in the public who fundamentally do not believe that governments should fund school lunches or require healthy school food and beverage provision policies.

**Local Food Procurement:** Local food procurement faces hurdles such as concerns about food safety, inconsistent availability from small producers, and the need for better infrastructure for distribution.

**Broader Food Movement:** The broader food movement including, for example, community gardens, food rescue, food banks, social supermarkets, is diverse and often fragmented, limiting its potential for widespread impact. However, Ka Ora, Ka Ako could serve as a powerful platform for finding “convergence in diversity” by coalescing the interests and goals of various food system actors around a shared agenda.

**Long-term Success:** The long-term success and sustainability of these initiatives often depend on sustained government investment and supportive policy frameworks.

#### 9.1.3 Ka Ora Ka Ako

In 2020, the school lunches programme (Ka Ora, Ka Ako) was scaled up nationally as part of the Covid economic recovery plan. It covered about one quarter of primary, intermediate and secondary students in the schools with the most

disadvantaged catchments. A variety of lunch delivery options were used in the original version 1.0 funding model (in-school, local caterer, hapu/iwi, large corporate caterer) with a sliding scale of cost per lunch (\$6.99 to \$8.90 per meal for Y4-13) depending on the age of students and provision model.

In 2024, the funding and delivery model changed to a low-cost version 2.0 (\$3-4 per meal) whereby large industrial food companies were given the contracts as the School Lunches Collective to supply food to all eligible schools except primary schools (due to switch to the low-cost model in 2026) and those schools served by in-school and hapu/iwi models. The first two school terms of the new low-cost model were disastrous with dozens of complaints and media reports of late, substandard, unappetising lunches, and excessive waste accompanied by the bankruptcy of one of the industrial providers and added government funding to the SLC and schools to cover funding gaps.

### 9.1.4 School Food and Beverage Policies

In 2022, the government shifted its school policies from the National Administrative Guidelines #5 (NAG-5) to regulations under the Education and Training Act 2020. Unfortunately, with that change came a missed opportunity to strengthen the regulations and they remain that schools are required to 'promote' healthy food and beverage consumption, but are not required to ensure the foods 'provided' by the schools are healthy. Revising those regulations is possible under a new government.

## 9.2 Sub-model

### Explanation of The Sub-model

A well designed and funded school food programme is probably the biggest single investment that can be made to improve local food systems. The provision of good quality food has an immediate effect on well-being and evidence

indicates it also has positive flow-on effects from this such greater attendance and engagement in school and improved student physical and mental well-being. School food programmes can also, especially when linked to the curriculum, have a major effect on food literacy and over time changing food preferences and potentially reduce the power of the fast-food culture.

School lunches also have wider influences into the community and the food system. When school food programmes, as they are in many parts of the world, are incentivised to prioritise local produce, it can have a major effect on the scale of local food production by providing a large and reliable demand. This not only increases the amount of food grown locally and thereby improving access to healthy food beyond the school gates, it also provides increased local employment. Like community gardens, school food programmes are a major vehicle for delivering change to local food systems. To be realised however it needs leadership and supportive policies.

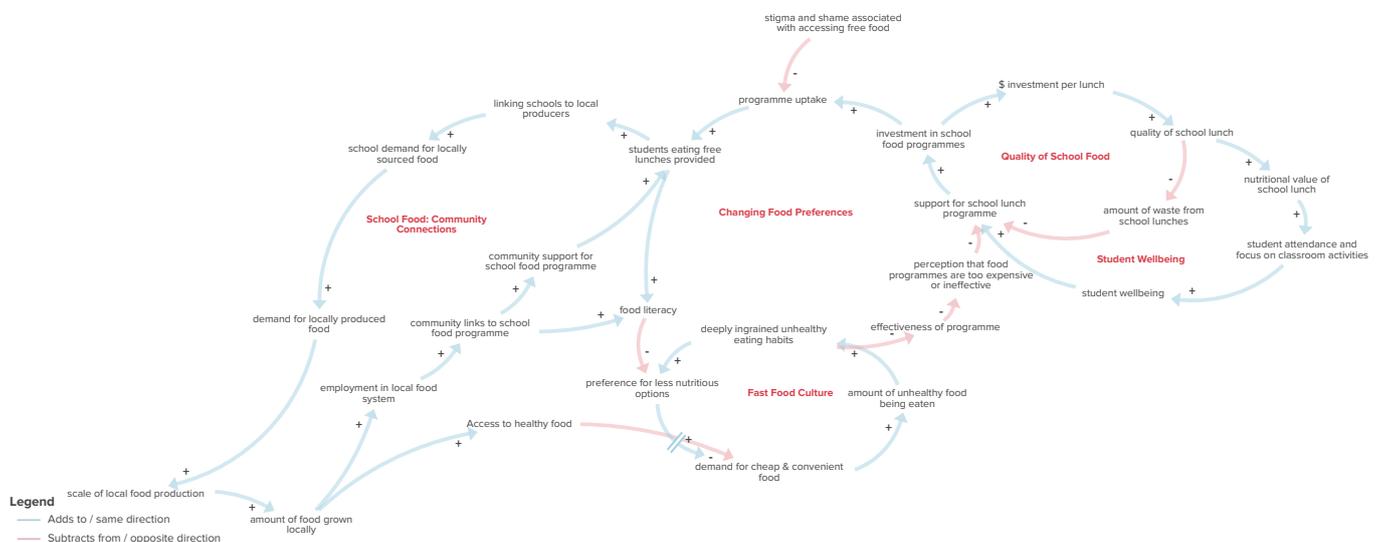
### Feedback Loops

**Quality of School Food:** good quality school food provides nutrition and is associated with lower levels of waste.

**Student Mental Well-being:** it also has a direct effect on student physical and mental well-being and improving their overall experience of school

**Changing Food Preferences:** there is evidence to show that over time, nutritious school food can influence overall food preferences and over time, potentially reducing the demand for fast-food.

**Community Connections:** in New Zealand, the big untapped potential of school food programmes is to provide a foundation for significantly increasing the amount of food grown locally, and making local food production more financially viable.



## 9.3 Areas of Focus

Key areas of focus within the theme of School Food:

- Increased consumption of nutritious foods, such as fruit and vegetables
- Increased school attendance, cognition
- Food literacy, encompassing knowledge about production, access, nutrition, and practical skills like growing, shopping, cooking, and composting
- Universal school food programmes can reduce the stigma associated with receiving free meals resulting in higher uptake composting
- Easing financial stress for families
- Schools have agency over the school lunches
- Food and nutrition programmes in schools (NGOs, charities etc.)

## 9.4 Illustrative Data

### 9.4.1 Qualitative Data

#### Quotes From School Principals

*“The school lunches is a direct, effective way of tackling some of the worst effects of poverty in Aotearoa on our tamariki. We cannot leave them to go hungry again.”*

*“There are so many hardworking people in insecure jobs, juggling several part-time positions along with their wider family commitments of children, aging parents and whānau obligations. Ka Ora Ka Ako really makes a positive difference for whānau when funded at the right level.”*

*“If children are hungry, then they are not in the right state of mind to learn.”*

*“The Scandinavians have been investing in their children for years with so many positive health and education outcomes.”*

*“What is more important than investing in the health and education of our young people?”*

*“The biggest impact on the reduced funding for 2025 has been on providing a wholesome meal with a good portion of protein, using fresh vegetables, quality ingredients. Due to the reduction in funding, we have had to reduce the portion of protein considerably as this is the most expensive component of a meal. (school with internal model reducing from \$8.39 to \$4.00 per meal).”*

*“For some of our students, knowing that a warm, healthy lunch awaits them is the reason they come to school. It removes one more barrier to attendance and engagement.”*

*“A hungry student cannot learn. The lunch programme gives every student the chance to focus on their learning rather than their next meal. The impact on engagement and achievement is undeniable.”*

#### Quotes From Students (From HCA Summit With Students)

*“Now seeing it, it’s kind of unfortunate to see that the portions have gone smaller and... the quality is not at the standard as it was last year.”*

*“The portions of a single meal are about the same as a primary school student’s... So I don’t know how that’s gonna really fulfill the boys and their needs.”*

*“It really does help our school culture... we’re able to connect with others during lunch time... it also connects us strongly as a school... instead of fights, you become more friends throughout the school”*

*“It’s very much a social aspect... we each have time to communicate with each other and talk with one another in less of a classroom environment and more of just as if you were at a restaurant.”*

*“I was very privileged to come to high school as a year 9 having the school lunch programme already here.”*

*“When we’ve got bad food or not as much food, there’s a big loss of concentration. Everybody’s titchy. They’re irritable. They just want to get through the day... better lunches would really help our school culture.”*

*“So at our school, being a pretty low decile school, we find that our school lunches are very important to our students... that’s where they get their brainpower.”*

*“When you’re hungry you get stropky, you get moody, you get more tired... food really affects our mental well-being as well as our emotional well-being.”*

*“We’ve got quite a large whānau at home and having school lunches really helps because it puts less stress on mum and dad... especially on a cold day, having like a hot soup really helps us.”*

*“An increase in wastage, because last year there wasn’t that much. But now I can just look in like the bins, and I see uneaten food.”*

*“We have in-house chefs who cook our lunches for us every day... hot, nice, never cold and very healthy and nutritional.”*

### 9.4.2 Quantitative Data

The four Board areas of South Auckland have 103 schools serving 55,000 students. 76 schools have KOKA and 27 do not. 41,000 students receive KOKA = 74% of students. The value of the school meals in South Auckland is over \$25 million per year.

#### Breakdown of South Auckland Schools by Board Area

	Māngere- Ōtāhuhu	Ōtara- Papatoetoe	Manurewa	Papakura	Total
<b>Total schools</b>	30	28	26	19	103
<b>Primary</b>	9	15	14	5	43
<b>Full primary</b>	8	5	6	10	29
<b>Intermediate</b>	2	4	3	2	11
<b>Secondary</b>	7	4	1	2	14
<b>Composite</b>	4	0	0	0	4
<b>KOKA programme</b>	92%	79%	71%	47%	75%

### Value for Investment Analysis

The participatory Value for Investment analysis on the original KOKA version (2024) identified 21 values as determined through workshops with school principals, community organisations and ministries of education and health. They were grouped into the '5E Economic Framework' (effectiveness, efficiency, economy, equity, and cost-effectiveness). The evidence for performance on each of the 21 values was collated from 44 national sources (and international evidence where needed)<sup>28</sup>.

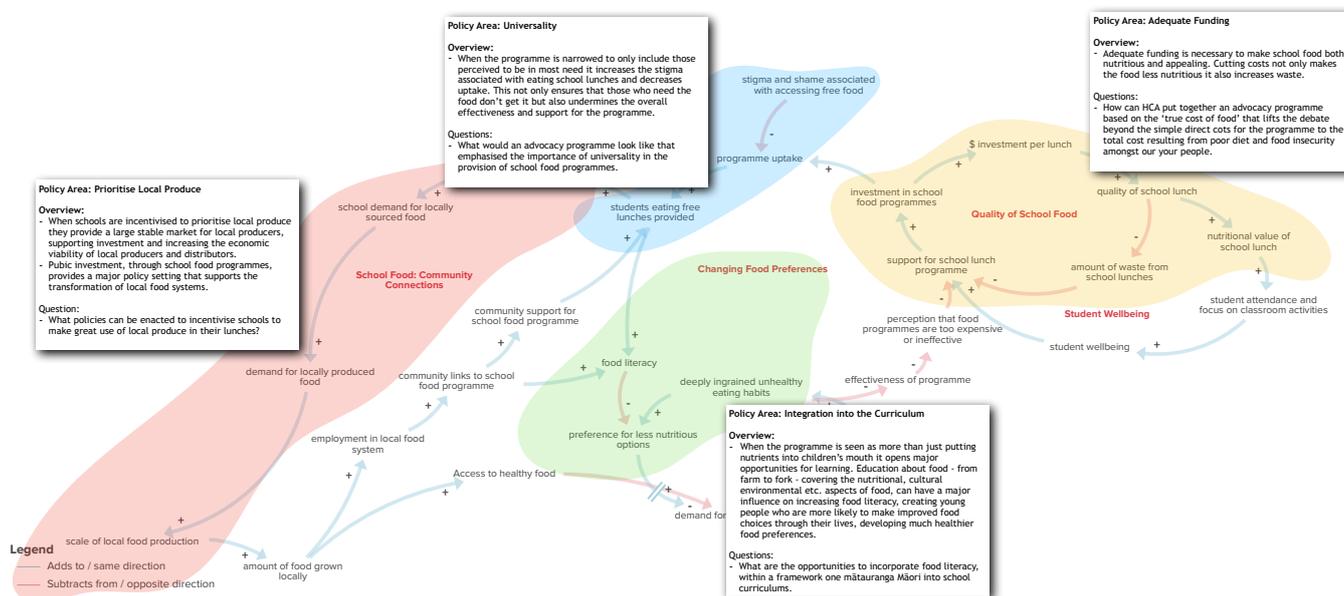
## Final Assessments of Value for Investment for Ka Ora, Ka Ako

CRITERIA	SUBCRITERIA (primary outcomes in BLUE)	ASSESSMENT
EFFECTIVENESS	Alleviating hunger at schools	GOOD
	Healthy eating (lunches are healthy, safe, and high quality; promote healthy eating habits and food culture)	EXCELLENT
	Improved diet-related outcomes (mental health, healthy weight, dental health)	GOOD
	Reduced financial burden on disadvantaged households	EXCELLENT
	Strengthened local economies (local employment at living wage, local and lwi-centred procurement and distribution)	GOOD
	Reduced barriers to education and improved long-term educational outcomes (attendance, classroom engagement, educational attainment, high-school retention, curriculum links including mātauranga Māori, sustainability and nutrition)	GOOD
	Improved mana and self-esteem	GOOD
	Improved community cohesion (whānau engagement with schools, improved cultural identity through food)	GOOD
	Increased food system resilience (% local food in lunches, strong and short supply lines, access to healthy affordable foods)	GOOD
	Lunch menus, packaging and operations are sustainable	GOOD
ECONOMY	Resources are well managed through procurement/provision/distribution policies and practices	GOOD
	Fair balance of cost to govt vs quality of lunches, pay for staff and profit for providers	EXCELLENT
	Certainty of continuity of the programme	ADEQUATE
	Productive delivery (delivering healthy, safe, sufficient, locally-based meals, on time, within budget)	EXCELLENT
EFFICIENCY	Optimal level of food surplus and minimal level of food and packaging waste	GOOD
	Efficiencies in design and continuous quality improvement systems in place	EXCELLENT
EQUITY	Systems in place to prioritise local sustainable procurement and meal planning	ADEQUATE
	Across schools: the programme resources and targets schools to reach the students most in need	GOOD
	Within schools: design minimises food poverty stigma	EXCELLENT
COST-EFFECTIVENESS	Provisions for tailoring to school needs with policies and support systems for smaller schools and small-scale suppliers	EXCELLENT
	The programme creates more value than it consumes based on break-even analysis of monetisable investments and benefits, and qualitative consideration of intangibles	EXCELLENT

28 Mejía Toro C, King J, Mackay S, Tipene-Leach D, Swinburn B. (2025) Free, healthy school lunches in New Zealand: A Value for Investment analysis. BMC Public Health. Oct 21;25(1):3546

## 9.5 Policy Levers and Intervention Points

### 9.5.1 Policy Maps



### 9.5.2 Potential Interventions Identified in the Community Workshop

- Procurement – everything within 50km
- Influence government procurement guidelines
- Links into school curriculum
- Cross-party support for Ka Ora Ka Ako 3.0

The relationship of school food to the wider South Auckland food system could be far closer and influential if the funding model reverts to one closer to the original model than the new low-cost model. There is a strong potential for a de-centralised Ka Ora, Ka Ako to engage more local people in the lunches programme and for the programme itself to stimulate more locally-grown, sustainable food for school lunches.

### 9.5.3 Potential Interventions Identified from Research and Wider Stakeholder Discussions

Health Coalition Aotearoa has been working with school principals and other concerned groups such as NZEI, PPTA, Child Poverty Action Group to identify core asks for the next version of Ka Ora, Ka Ako. They also drew on research findings, particularly from the Nourishing Hawke's Bay: He Wairua Tō Te Kai project. Based on this work, the potential policy pathways to improve nutritional health through schools are as follows:

#### 1. Strengthen Ka Ora, Ka Ako

This is the biggest intervention to improve child nutrition NZ has seen and it is under serious threat of being discontinued or severely compromised by budget cuts. There is already substantial groundswell from schools, communities and NGOs to achieve 3 objectives:

- Ensure the programme is continued with baseline funding through the Ministry of Education,
- Optimise the design of the programme to achieve the maximum outcomes at the greatest efficiency,
  - Expand the programme to reach at least 50% of children so that the majority of children from food insecure homes are covered.
- Link Ka Ora, Ka Ako more closely with the curriculum and local food systems.

Many organisations, led by Health Coalition Aotearoa are calling for these changes. A strong coalition of South Auckland schools, communities and organisations would add considerable voice and weight to this campaign.

In the longer run, there is much more opportunity for Ka Ora, Ka Ako to be a catalyst for wider benefits such as stronger links to the curriculum and matauranga Māori, building stronger food cultures and social interactions, and using procurement policies to catalyse local food production and supply for the lunches.

## **2. Strengthen School Food Policies**

The Education and Training Act has regulations to require schools to promote healthy food and drinks in school, but no regulations to require the provision of foods and drinks in schools to be healthy (i.e. schools have to teach health, but don't have to do health). With a small amount of political will, these provision regulations could be readily enacted.

In addition, there are multiple food and nutrition related programmes available to schools directed at feeding hungry students, providing curriculum resources, and initiative such as building school gardens. These are largely funded by charities and businesses, and they also help to strengthen food security, nutrition education, and a healthier learning environment.

## **9.6 Major Policy Opportunities**

There is an existing collaboration of national organisations, led by Health Coalition Aotearoa, which is calling for Ka Ora, Ka Ako version 3.0 to be developed drawing on the best learnings from the versions 1.0 and 2.0 and for this to receive ongoing, adequate funding. The major policy opportunity for South Auckland is to bring the strong, collective community voice for Ka Ora, Ka Ako and healthy school food.

- Ensure Ka Ora, Ka Ako is properly funded, optimised, extended, and linked to local food systems
- Enact Healthy School Food and Drink Policies for all schools

## 9.7 School Food: Key Takeaways

- ✓ **A Major Intervention for Food Security:** School food programmes are a critical setting for addressing food security, health, and education challenges. The Ka Ora, Ka Ako programme is an enormous intervention in South Auckland, reaching about three-quarters of students (41,000) and injecting over \$25 million worth of food into the community annually.
- ✓ **Direct Benefits for Students and Families:** The primary goals of school lunches are to alleviate hunger, reduce financial burdens on families, improve child nutrition and increase school engagement. Principals report the programme is a direct and effective way to tackle the effects of poverty, while students state that having a good lunch improves their concentration, mental well-being, and reduces stress on their parents.
- ✓ **Potential to Strengthen Local Food Systems:** School food programmes have the untapped potential to be a major vehicle for change in local food systems. By creating policies that prioritise buying from local producers, school food programmes could provide a large and reliable demand, which would in turn stimulate local food production, create local jobs, and improve access to healthy food beyond the school gates.
- ✓ **Crucial Role of Funding and Delivery Models:** The success of these programmes is heavily dependent on sustained government investment and the delivery model. The recent shift to a new low-cost model for Ka Ora, Ka Ako, using large industrial providers, has been described as “disastrous,” resulting in smaller, substandard lunches, increased food waste, and the bankruptcy of one provider.
- ✓ **Promoting Holistic Education and Food Literacy:** Successful programmes take a holistic, systems-based approach that integrates food into the curriculum. This helps to improve food literacy, which includes knowledge about food production, nutrition, and practical skills like growing, cooking, and composting.
- ✓ **Improving School Attendance and Culture:** Principals and students agree that the lunch programme improves school engagement and culture. For some students, knowing a warm meal is available is the reason they attend school, and students report that sharing lunch socially helps build friendships and reduces conflict.
- ✓ **Reducing Stigma Through Universal Provision:** A key benefit of universal school food programmes is that they reduce the stigma and shame that can be associated with receiving free meals. This leads to higher uptake, ensuring more children benefit from the programme.
- ✓ **Need for Stronger Government Policy:** The long-term success of school food initiatives requires supportive policy frameworks. Advocates call for strengthening the Ka Ora, Ka Ako programme and amending the Education and Training Act to require that food provided in schools must be healthy, not just promoted as healthy.

## 10. Theme 6: Food Consumption

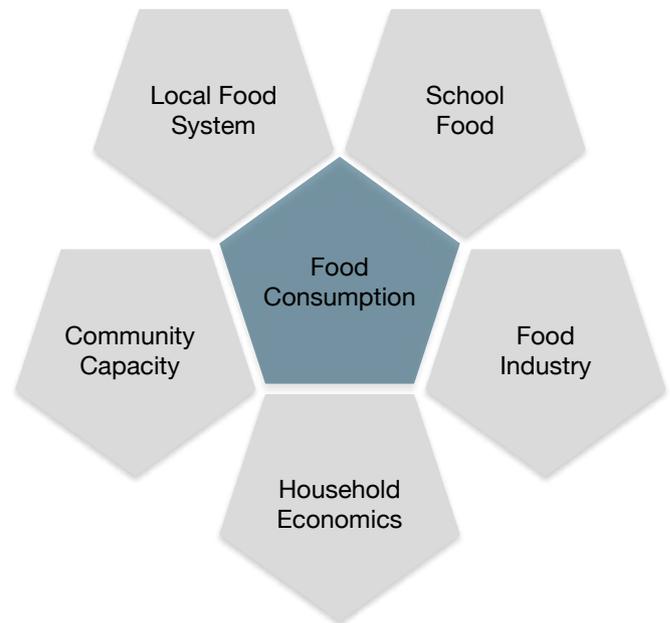
What people consume is not simply a matter of individual choice but is influenced by a wide range of interconnected factors highlighted in the preceding five themes.

These themes interact to create a food environment that often leads to diets which are low in healthy foods like vegetables and fruit and dominated by unhealthy, ultra-processed foods.

**Household Economics (Theme 3)** is the predominant influencing factor. The high cost of nutritious food, combined with low household incomes and the financial strain of other essential costs like housing, makes healthy options unaffordable for many families. This economic pressure forces households to opt for cheaper, less nutritious alternatives and increases reliance on fast food. The need to work long hours also reduces the time available for preparing healthy meals, further driving the demand for convenient, unhealthy food.

**Industrial Food Systems (Theme 4)** is a major contributing factor affecting the accessibility and availability of food. Poorer communities often have fewer supermarkets and a high concentration of fast-food outlets, making unhealthy food the most convenient option. This system is driven by an economic model that prioritises profit from mass production over community health. Rules and regulations are often designed to benefit large distributors and retailers, creating barriers for healthier, local alternatives.

**Local Food Systems (Theme 1)** are relatively weak which means they are often unable to significantly counter the high cost and poor accessibility of healthy food offered by the industrial system. While initiatives like community gardens and food hubs provide access to affordable and culturally appropriate food, they need to grow into a connected, region-wide system to have a substantial impact on community-wide food consumption.



**Community Capacity (Theme 2)** is underpinned by significant cultural and behavioural factors. An increasing disconnection from traditional food practices and the land, combined with a loss of knowledge about how to grow and prepare food, leads to a greater reliance on external food sources like supermarkets and fast-food outlets. Building community capacity through indigenous approaches can help restore this knowledge and foster self-sufficiency, but communities face barriers like lack of land and resources.

**School Food (Theme 5)** represents a major intervention that directly affects food consumption. Programmes like Ka Ora, Ka Ako provide healthy meals, alleviating food insecurity and reducing the financial burden on households. Over time, these programmes can improve food literacy and help change food preferences, potentially reducing the demand for cheap, convenient fast food.

## 10.1 Food Consumption: Key Takeaways

- ✓ **Food Consumption is Shaped by Systems, Not Just Individual Choices:** What people eat is the outcome of a complex system where economic pressures, community capacity, the food environment, and policy all interact.
- ✓ **Economic Factors are a Primary Driver of Poor Nutrition:** The high cost of healthy food combined with low household incomes is the most significant barrier, forcing families into a diet of cheaper, energy-dense, and nutrient-poor convenience foods.
- ✓ **The Industrial Food System Creates Unhealthy Environments:** The current system, driven by profit, actively promotes unhealthy food consumption through the high density of fast-food outlets and powerful marketing, while making healthy options less accessible and affordable.
- ✓ **Local, Community-led Systems Offer a Viable Alternative But Need Support:** Local food systems and indigenous-led community initiatives are crucial for providing access to affordable, healthy, and culturally appropriate food. However, they are undermined by systemic barriers such as lack of land, unstable funding, and regulations favouring the industrial model.
- ✓ **School Food Programmes Are a Powerful and Direct Intervention:** Ka Ora Ka Ako is an enormous and effective intervention in South Auckland that directly addresses food insecurity, improves nutrition, and eases family financial burdens. Ensuring its longevity and optimising its design to support local food production is of the highest importance for community well-being.

## 11. Policies & Actions

Changing food consumption patterns requires a comprehensive set of policy changes and coordinated actions at both the national and local levels. These interventions must address the root causes of why people consume diets high in unhealthy, ultra-processed food, which are driven by household economics, the industrial food system, and a lack of robust local alternatives.

A strong, collective South Auckland voice for policies which support the food environments for better health, education, food security and environmental sustainability would create the powerful community leadership needed for policy change. The potential policy targets which have emerged from the community interviews, hui, and research findings are:

### 11.1 Strengthening Local Food Systems (Auckland Council)

Use the forthcoming development of the Auckland Unitary Plan 2026- as the opportunity to create the policy environment needed to promote healthy, local food systems.

- **Enable Access to Land:** Auckland Council can support the establishment of more community gardens and urban farms by streamlining approval processes through Local Boards. A critical step is to advocate for urban farming to be reclassified as a permitted activity in the Auckland Unitary Plan (AUP) review, as its current undefined status is a major hurdle.
- **Invest in Local Food Infrastructure:** Policies should focus on moving beyond individual gardens to create a connected system. This includes investing in infrastructure like food hubs that can aggregate and distribute locally grown produce, helping these initiatives become economically viable.
- **Support Social and Co-operative Enterprises:** New legal structures, such as “for purpose for profit” companies, are needed to help community food initiatives become commercially viable. Local councils can provide a “leg up” to these social enterprises through funding, low rents, and procedural support. Community members also advocate for developing values-based co-operative models to allow local gardens to work together for economic gain.
- **Simplify Regulations for Small Growers:** Existing regulations, such as MPI standards, are often designed for large corporations and create significant barriers for small, community-led initiatives. Policies are needed to simplify food regulations to suit the specific needs of these local groups.

### 11.2 Strengthen School Food Systems (Central Government)

Join with Health Coalition Aotearoa and its wider coalition of national organisations and provide the community voice calling for healthy school food programmes and policies.

- **Create an optimal Ka Ora, Ka Ako 3.0:** The key policy action is to strengthen the Ka Ora, Ka Ako programme by ensuring it has sustained, adequate funding and an optimised design. i.e. version 3.0), needs to be expanded to cover more schools with high numbers of students from food insecure households, and becomes more connected with local food systems. A strong advocacy coalition from South Auckland could add significant weight to this campaign.
- **Mandate Local Procurement for Schools:** A crucial policy shift would be to **change government procurement guidelines to prioritise buying produce from local growers** for school lunch programmes. This would create a large, reliable demand that stimulates local food production and creates local jobs.
- **Require Healthy Food Provision in Schools:** The Education and Training Act currently requires schools to *promote* healthy food but not to *provide* it. A small but impactful policy change would be to amend the Act to mandate that all food and beverages provided in schools must be healthy.

### 11.3 Build Community Capacity (Auckland Council and Other Funding Sources)

There is great passion and many local activities already underway in South Auckland to build community knowledge and expertise around local food systems. To build these into connected and impactful systems, there needs to be a substantial increase in investing in community capacity and innovation.

- **Prioritise and Resource Local and Indigenous Approaches:** Policy must recognise that building community capacity in South Auckland must be community-led, with local and indigenous approaches at the forefront. This includes embedding Mātauranga Māori in food strategies, offering programmes aligned with Maramataka (the Māori lunar calendar), and paying kaumatua to run wānanga (workshops) on traditional food knowledge.

## 11.4 Constrain Industrial Food Systems (Central Government and Auckland Council)

Currently communities and councils have no legal means of preventing fast-food outlets opening near schools or reducing the density of outlets based on health, equity or food sovereignty grounds. Changing this policy environment will require central government enabling legislation to provide councils with the by-law authority to include the community's and council's desires for healthy neighbourhoods into consenting for commercial food enterprises. Similarly, there are opportunities to reduce the exposure of children to outdoor advertising for unhealthy foods, some of which require policy and regulatory changes.

- **Regulate Unhealthy Food Outlets:** This requires central government to pass new legislation, likely through the Natural and Built Environment Act (NBA), that directs councils to manage this issue through a by-law mechanism. This would involve the ability for Councils to decline consent for a fast-food outlet based on locality (i.e. proximity to schools and children's settings) and density. International experience suggests that such regulations are feasible and effective, however, policy arguments based on economic and environmental factors are often more successful than those based on health alone.
- **Exclude Advertisements for Unhealthy Foods on Auckland Transport Assets:** Auckland Transport (now an internal structure rather than an arm's length Council Controlled Organisation) has a policy for its advertising which disallows advertisements for some products such as alcohol. Unhealthy food needs to be included in this list and incorporated into the contractual arrangements with Media Works which now has the contract to manage this advertising on buses, trains, bus stops and stations.
- **Reduce Other Outdoor Advertising for Unhealthy Foods:** Auckland Council does have authority over advertising on its own assets (eg. parks, recreation centres, sports stadia) and billboards in general. However, this usually does not include constraints on the content of the advertising. Opportunities for this to occur will need to be explored.

## 11.5 Reduce Poverty and High Prices of Healthy Foods (Central Government)

While local actions are crucial, the most powerful levers for changing household economics and countering the dominance of the industrial food system are at the national level and involve policies to lift low incomes and reduce the high cost of healthy food.

- **Address Low Incomes:** Multiple policy levers will be needed to address New Zealand's appalling level of poverty, including child food poverty. These include a wider application of the living wage, Universal Basic Income approaches, wider implementation of fair pay for female-dominated professions, and fairer adjustments to welfare payments.
- **Address the High Cost of Healthy Foods:** While removing GST on fruit and vegetables or all healthy foods has been suggested, it does come with serious equity concerns. Introducing a levy on the sugary drinks industry or a tax on ultra-processed foods could provide funding for other systems of supporting low-income households purchasing healthy foods.

## 12. Conclusions

### **Food Insecurity is a Systemic Problem, Not a Series of Isolated Issues:**

The report's fundamental conclusion is that food insecurity in South Auckland is the result of a complex, interconnected system where various factors influence each other. It explicitly states there is no single fix and that focusing on individual aspects – like community gardens or supermarket prices in isolation – is insufficient because it can lead to unintended consequences and fails to address the root causes.

### **Household Economics is the Predominant Driver of Poor Food Consumption:**

The report concludes that household economics is the most powerful factor shaping food choices. The combination of low incomes and the high cost of healthy food make nutritious options unaffordable for many families, forcing them to rely on cheaper ultra-processed alternatives. This creates a reinforcing cycle where poor nutrition can negatively impact health and earning potential, further entrenching food insecurity.

### **The Industrial Food System Actively Creates an Unhealthy Environment:**

The current industrial food system is identified as a primary cause of the problem. The report concludes that its core model, which prioritises profit over community health, creates a food environment saturated with unhealthy, convenient options. This is exacerbated by the supermarket duopoly, a focus on exports, and policies that are designed to benefit large corporations, which in turn create significant barriers for smaller, local, and healthier alternatives.

### **Community-led and Indigenous Approaches are Essential for Building a Sustainable Solution:**

A central conclusion is that any effective response must be community-led, with indigenous approaches coming to the fore. The report finds that Mātauranga Māori and systems thinking are complementary, sharing a holistic focus on interconnections. Building community capacity through these culturally grounded approaches is seen as the necessary foundation for developing resilient and self-sufficient local food systems.

### **Community Collective Voice:**

The most powerful way to create healthier food systems in South Auckland is to ensure that the Auckland Council policy settings are conducive to allowing the community's energy and innovation for local food systems to thrive and to constrain the dominant influence of the industrial food system which is promoting unhealthy food. A strong voice for central government policies such as strengthening Ka Ora, Ka Ako and reducing poverty is also critical.

### **Local Food Systems Hold Potential But Lack Scale and Connectivity:**

While local initiatives like community gardens and food hubs are vital assets, the report concludes they are currently too fragmented to have a significant, region-wide impact. A key conclusion is that these individual projects must be supported by policy and investment to grow into a connected system with the infrastructure to aggregate and distribute produce, thereby becoming a viable alternative to the industrial system.

### **Ka Ora Ka Ako is a Major and Untapped Lever for Systemic Change:**

The report identifies Ka Ora, Ka Ako, as an enormous and highly effective intervention that directly alleviates food insecurity and financial stress on families. It concludes that beyond feeding students, Ka Ora Ka Ako has the largely untapped potential to be a major vehicle for change by creating a large, reliable demand for locally grown food, which could stimulate the entire local food economy and improve food literacy.

### **Policy and Regulation are Major Barriers to Progress:**

The report concludes that the current policy landscape actively hinders the development of healthier food systems. Key barriers identified include food regulations designed for large distributors that are unsuitable for community initiatives, the lack of specific legal structures for social enterprises, and the fact that local councils have no authority to regulate the density of unhealthy food outlets.

### **Food Consumption is an Outcome of the System, Not Simply a Personal Choice:**

Ultimately, the report concludes that what people eat is the result of the entire system it describes. Food consumption patterns are directly shaped by the interplay of household economics, the availability of food dictated by the industrial system, the strength of local alternatives, and the community's cultural connection to food. Therefore, changing these patterns requires changing the system itself, not just focusing on individual choices.

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# 14. Appendix: System Maps

## 14.1 The Elephant in The Room

The map shown below is large and complex. It tries to capture what we learnt in the interviews and what we know from local and international research. Despite its evidence base, taken as a whole it can be confusing and potentially get in the way of useful discussion. To ensure that does not happen this section will talk you through how to read causal maps and how to use them to develop community actions and policy recommendations.



## 14.2 Reading System Maps

To help readers understand how to navigate the system maps this section will walk through the map, starting with one small section. It will build from there, showing how the maps work and showing how the key components are connected, influencing each other and ultimately influencing the food that people consume.

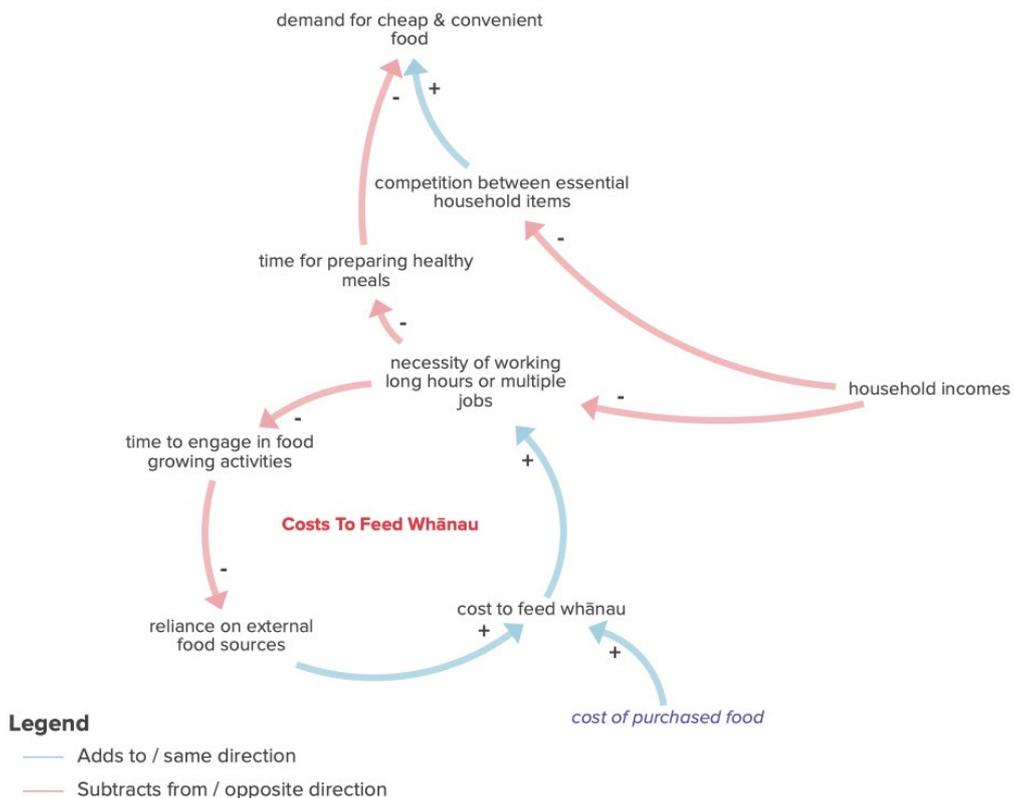
This initial map shows one part highlighting the *cost to feed whānau* due to the *cost of purchased food*. The blue arrow shows that as the *cost of purchased food* goes UP the cost of feeding the whānau also goes UP. It also shows that if the *cost of purchased food* goes DOWN so does the cost of feeding the family i.e. a change in one LEADS TO a change in the other, in the same direction. If one goes up so does the other. If one goes down so does the other.

Because of the increasing *cost to feed whānau*, families often have to face the necessity of *working long hours or multiple jobs*. In turn, as families work longer hours and/or work in multiple jobs they have LESS '*time to engage in food growing activities*'. This is shown by the red arrow with the '-' sign. This means that as the necessity of working long hours or multiple jobs go UP, the time to engage in food growing activities goes DOWN. Conversely, if families are able to REDUCE the time they have to work then the time to engage in food growing activities would go UP. As *time to engage in food growing activities* goes down then the families reliance on external food sources, such as supermarkets and dairies, goes up which, closing the circle, INCREASES the cost to feed whānau. This loop is known as a feedback loop and one in which many families find themselves. But it is more complex than this.



Extending the initial map we have included household incomes as they are a key driver affecting the food that people consume.

As the map shows the necessity of *working long hours or multiple jobs* INCREASES as household incomes DECREASE, which is what has been happening, in real terms, over many years. This reinforces the feedback loop described above, forcing families to rely on *external food sources* and thereby increasing the *cost to feed whānau*. But also, as the map show having to work long hours and/or multiple jobs also reduce the *time for preparing healthy meals*, creating a demand for *cheap and convenient food*.



To fill out the picture a bit more the next map shows some of the consequences that result from this demand for cheap and convenient food.

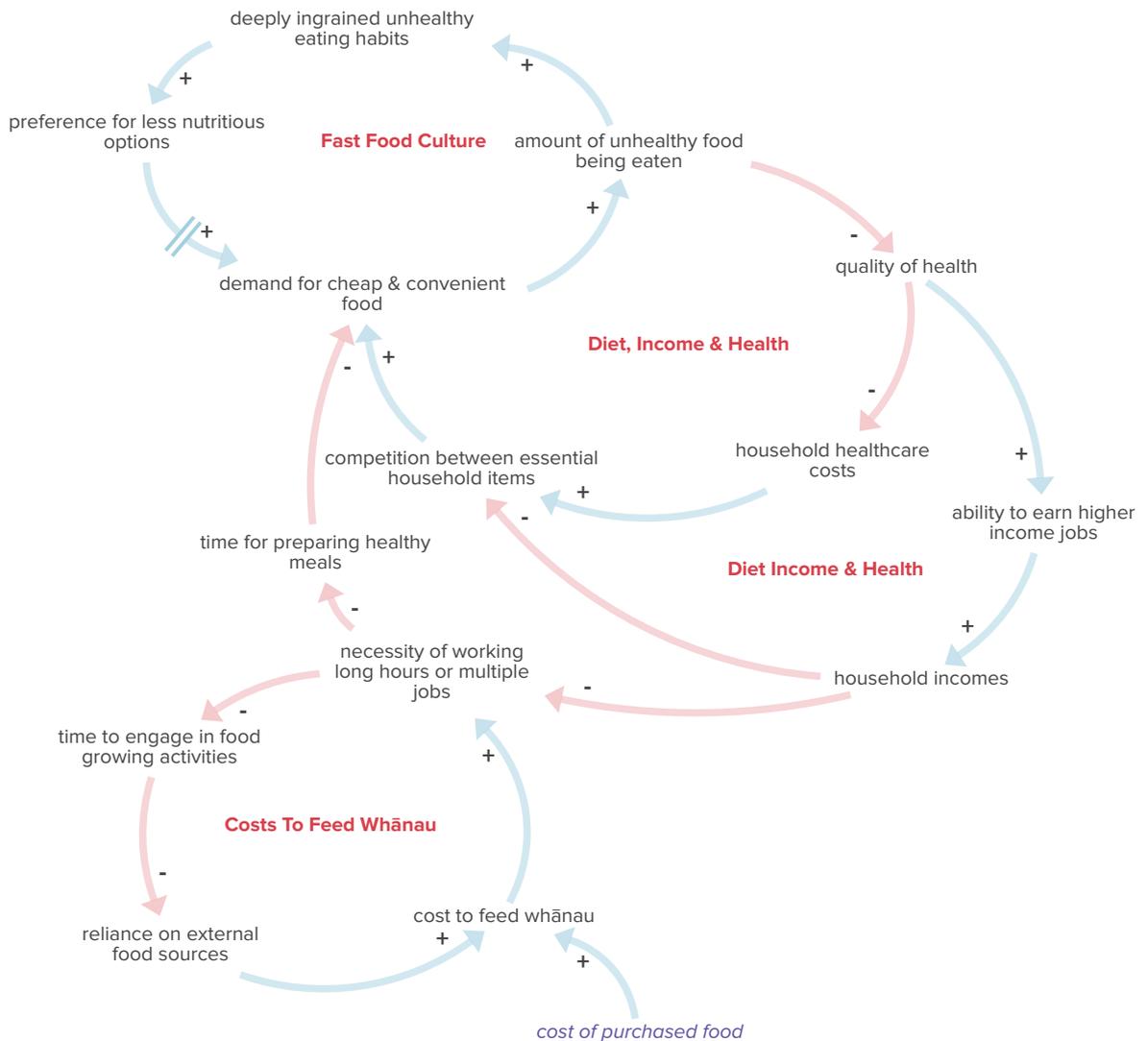
While this map contains a lot more information the way of reading it remains the same. The arrows highlight lines of influence and the colour of the arrow and the associated '+' or '-' sign indicate the direction of the influence. Because of this, once you get used to the structure of causal maps it becomes as easy to read a large complex map as it is to read a small map.

The extra information in this map highlights the multiple causes affecting what people eat and the consequences that result from it.

Looking again at *household incomes* the map also shows that *household incomes* DECREASE the *competition between essential household items* INCREASES. Families on low incomes have to make choices between paying the power or rent, or buying food. This competition, along with the reduced

*time for preparing healthy meals* further contributes to the demand for cheap and convenient food. This increases the *amount of unhealthy food being eaten*, which, because such food is designed to be highly addictive, develops over time into *deeply ingrained unhealthy eating habits* which then increase peoples' *preference for less nutritious options*, further increasing the *demand for cheap and convenient food*. This cycle of eating unhealthy food leads to a LOWER quality of health, resulting in INCREASED *household healthcare costs* adding further competition between essential household items, perpetuating the cycle. Over time poorer *quality of health* also decreases peoples' *ability to earn higher incomes jobs*, further lowering *household incomes*, forcing families into feedback loops of poor health and low incomes.

This is not the full story, but provides an introduction to reading the maps described in the report, that aim to capture the complex and interacting set of factors that drive the current food system and its effect upon the people of South Auckland.



**Legend**

- Adds to / same direction
- Subtracts from / opposite direction

### 14.3 Using the Maps to Design Community Actions and Policy Recommendations

To use the maps to design community actions and develop policy recommendations it's important to not get lost in the complexity of the whole map. Instead focus on one feedback loop at a time. Staying with the feedback loops discussed above, it is clear that the major drivers are the *cost of purchased food* and the *low household incomes*. While there is little that the community can do to address these big issues the maps highlight that they must remain at the centre of any policy recommendations and advocacy programmes.

But the maps do point to areas that local action can be focused on. The first is the link between *time to engage in food growing activities* and *reliance on external food sources* such as supermarkets and dairies. As outlined in the map the high cost of food, combined with low incomes means there is competition between essential household items – food has to compete with rent, power and other essential items. The result is long hours and/or multiple jobs. This is one of the major factors underlying the loss of knowledge of how to grow, prepare and cook food, leading to an almost total reliance of food retailers. So, a clear area for action, and support from Council is to increase levels of knowledge and skills, with the specific aim of increasing the amount of food cooked at home.

The other key area that can be looked at is the *demand for cheap and convenient food*. Many families that resort to fast food because of price and convenience are unaware of the significant health impact of the diet that over the long-term can have a considerable effect upon their whānau. So, the maps highlight the potential benefit of increasing food literacy, focusing on the health effects of different patterns of food consumption? It also challenges the Council to support programmes that educate people about the negative effects of fast-food consumption.

Neither of these actions, or any other action, will provide the 'silver bullet' to solve problems of food insecurity and poverty, and a key message of the systems approach, and the maps themselves, is that change will require multiple actions at many levels.

So, when using the maps to develop community actions and policy recommendations:

1. Work with one feedback loop at a time
2. Discuss the behaviour that the loop is creating and ask what needs to change
3. Look at each variable in the loop and ask
  - i. What can the community do right now
  - ii. What could the community do with some assistance
  - iii. What needs to be done by agencies outside of the community

The overall map is large and complex. It needs to be if it is to capture the realities of what people are facing. It also needs to be detailed enough that it can capture the variables that need to be addressed either through community action and/or policy changes. But, do not let the complexity stop you from looking at specific pieces of the system. When talking about actions always focus on just one feedback loop. To paraphrase the well known proverb, this is a very big elephant, so just take one small bite at a time, or you'll end up with indigestion.



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