

# MURRAY HEALTHY FOOD SYSTEMS

## WHAT THE PROJECT INVOLVED

The Murray sub-region of the Loddon Mallee Public Health Unit delivered a capacity building project for organisations and community members in partnership with Sustain: The Australian Food Network. The project aimed to increase local food systems knowledge; understand food systems issues; understand community and producer needs; and build knowledge on how to enact food system change.

### PROJECT REFERENCE GROUP

A Project Reference Group (PRG) was convened including various geographic and sector representatives to provide oversight and input into the project design and delivery. Five PRG meetings were held with Sustain Australia between May and August 2024.

### CAPACITY BUILDING SESSIONS

Two-part workshops were delivered for community and organisations interested in local food systems in Buloke, Campaspe, Gannawarra and Swan Hill Local Government Areas (LGAs).

Workshop 1 included:

- Food systems 101
- Local mapping of the food system
- Strengths and challenges of the local food system
- Discussion topics for workshop 2

Workshop 2 included:

- Survey results presented for Buloke, Gannawarra and Swan Hill
- Deep dive into food literacy and local food growing

### FOOD AND FARMING SURVEY

A community food and farming survey was conducted across the Buloke, Gannawarra and Swan Hill LGAs (noting Campaspe’s participation in Healthy Loddon Campaspe and previous survey activities).

**200** Respondents to the survey

Key findings include;

- 44.3% of respondents experienced some level of food insecurity
- 52.9% reported that recent increases in the cost of living has caused them to buy less food than they used to
- 64% reported growing their own food at home
- 74.7% wanted to have more opportunities to buy local food

## RESULTS

### CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOPS

**21**

#### PARTICIPANTS IN WORKSHOP 1

- 9 Swan Hill, 5 Campaspe, 4 Gannawarra, 3 Buloke

**12**

#### PARTICIPANTS IN WORKSHOP 2

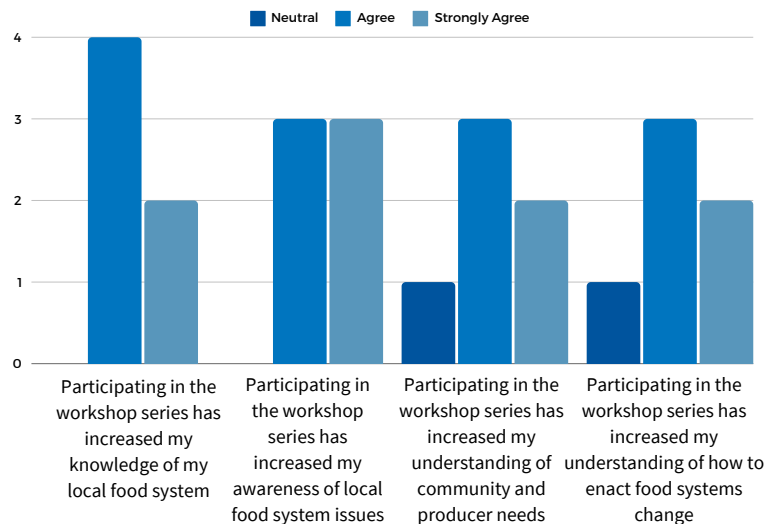
- 6 Campaspe, 2 Swan Hill, 2 Gannawarra, 2 Buloke

**9**

#### RESPONDENTS TO THE WORKSHOP EVALUATION

- 66% agreed and 33% strongly agreed that the sessions increased their knowledge of local food system
- 16.6% felt neutral, 50% agreed, 33% strongly agreed that the workshop series increased their understanding of community and producer needs and increased their understanding of how to enact food systems change

### POST WORKSHOP EVALUATION (n=9)





## RESULTS: COMMUNITY FOOD AND FARMING OVERVIEW

Participants were eligible if they were 18 or older and lived, worked, volunteered or studied in Buloke, Gannawarra and Swan Hill LGAs. The survey was open for responses online for four weeks from 1st of July 2024 to 31st July 2024. Survey promotion occurred via email, social media, newsletters and radio.

Please note that whilst the findings of this survey provide valuable insights to the region, given the small sample size (n=200) these results cannot be generalised to the population and should be interpreted with caution.

### RESPONDENTS TO THE SURVEY

200 respondents completed the survey (*Buloke LGA n=36, Gannawarra LGA n=56, Swan Hill LGA n=84*)

### SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

86.2% female; 11% male; 0.7% non-binary/gender fluid. 91.7% were Australian/New Zealander, 4.8% were European and 3.5% were Aboriginal. 16.5% of respondents were primary producers in the region.

### SUMMARY SURVEY FINDINGS (MORE IN DEPTH LGA ANALYSIS FORTHCOMING)

#### FOOD SECURITY

**44.3%**

Experienced some level of food insecurity

**30.5%**

Reported reducing the size of meals or skipping meals because there wasn't enough money for food in the last 12 months

**21.3%**

Accessed free food in the last 12 months

#### ACCESS TO FOOD

**89.1%**

Purchased from major supermarkets at least once per fortnight

**52.9%**

Reported that recent increases in the cost of living has caused them to buy less food than they used to

**24.3%**

Travelled outside their LGA for most of their food shopping

#### PARTICIPATION IN THE LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM

**71.1%**

Were motivated to purchase locally produced food to support the local economy

**49.4%**

Reported being unsure where to find and buy locally produced food

**29.5%**

Reported purchasing locally produced food a few times a year

**64%**

Reported growing their own food at home

#### PERCEPTIONS OF THE LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM

**74.7%**

Wanted to have more opportunities to buy local food in the LGA

**52%**

Wanted greater visibility of producers in the region

**41%**

Wanted more community food initiatives (e.g. food swaps, seed banks, pop-up markets, permaculture groups, education programs etc)

**30.1%**

More opportunities to grow food in community gardens or other public spaces

#### PRIMARY PRODUCERS

**64%**

Reported increased cost of input and operations (e.g. petrol, labour, ect) affects their business

**91.7%**

Reported that receiving a fair price for their products was the most important factor to them and their business

**36%**

Reported extreme weather events including bushfires, floods and droughts affects their business

**59.5%**

Reported investing in the long-term future of agriculture to increase the food production should be a priority for their LGA