



Options for an ALTERNATIVE FOOD SYSTEM

Save the world? Change the way you eat...

FOOD, IT'S MANY THINGS — but enjoyable though it might be, food has become the focus of serious concern over the way it is grown, processed, distributed and served.

Take a minute to recall the issues that have emerged to create anxiety around what we eat:

- farming practices that deplete and erode our soils
- health fears over pesticide and agrochemical residues
- global trade displacing small family farmers and perpetuating poverty
- loss of freshness and nutrients and excessive fossil fuel use and pollution through transporting food long distances
- the monopolistic effects of increasing corporate control of farming, food processing and sales and the impact

of supermarkets and malls on small streetfront business

- the unknown effects of genetically engineered crops and the genetic pollution of the traditional crop varieties.

Worldwide, we are rapidly losing the genius of traditional, sustainable farmers to the monoculture madness as our right to safe, nutritious, affordable food has been sold off in the name of progress.

We all need to eat and the choices we make about what we eat impacts on our health, our communities, our air, water and climate.

Securing a real food future

Is it any wonder that eaters — that's all of us — are turning to foods that they can trust?

Many of us are finding ways to resist negative food trends, ways which are more than just buying organically grown food. These alternative ways foster crop and food diversity, pay fair prices to farmers, provide habitat for native species, conserve natural resources and connect local farmers to local communities.

You can find some of these community-based food systems by turning the page...

Sign at Seed Savers Network, Byron Bay seed centre, NSW



Community gardens & city farms

All over the world, disused urban land is being transformed into productive food gardens.

Community gardens and city farms often become centres for community interaction, education, innovation and culture - just like CERES and Veg Out in Melbourne, Northey Street City Farm in Brisbane, Fern Tree Community Garden in Adelaide or Perth City Farm.

You can grow your herbs and vegetables in the shared garden or your own allotment, take a course or participating in the many social and cultural activities.

Box schemes

Fresh local produce, delivered to your door!

There are different types of box schemes ...some are small businesses who buy directly from farmers, others work on a cooperative model in which groups of people buy together in bulk.

Some farmers organise their own box schemes. The food is either delivered to households or collected from a pickup point (often the farm). Whatever scheme suits you, make sure it supports local growers.

Subscription farming

This is an eater-farmer arrangement in which buyers pay a subscription - a share of a farm's production expenses - in return for an ongoing share of the harvest.

Sometimes there is an opportunity to exchange hours working on the farm.

The scheme generates a sense of shared responsibility for our food and our future.

Community supported agriculture (CSA)

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) originally referred to particular models of subscription farming, but its use has been extended to describe any form of project which builds direct links between producers and consumers.



OPTIONS FOR ALTERNATIVE FOOD SYSTEMS

Food cooperatives

Food Coops are a great way to access affordable bulk goods and fresh produce with minimal waste.

Members receive discounts for volunteering in the work of the coop - it's a great way to keep prices down.

If there's no coop near you, get together with friends and neighbours to buy bulk your food and save money.

Farmers' markets

Despite the dominance of supermarkets, there's a major revival of farmers markets across the world.

The markets bring farmers better prices, the food is fresher and cheaper and shoppers interact with the people who grow their food.

Australia is catching on, and farmers markets are now found all over the country. The markets contribute the most to the community when the food is grown as locally as possible, and the market happens frequently enough (ie. weekly) to match the shopping habits of the eater and deliver consistent returns to the farmer.

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Home gardening & seed saving

You don't need a lot of space to start a simple kitchen garden. Even a small space can produce herbs and vegetables, as can a container garden on your apartment balcony. Small fruit trees take little space. An edible landscape is more interesting - and tastier - than lawn.

Join gardeners all over the world in the tradition of growing and saving open-pollinated, non-hybrid vegetables and herbs. You'll be helping to conserve irreplaceable genetic diversity and eating the freshest food there is.

...75% of edible garden varieties of vegetable have disappeared in the last century.

Local food, global resistance

The global economy is built upon the principles of economic growth and free trade. World Trade Organisation policies promote trade as more important than health, the environment and social or economic justice.

All over the world, countries are under pressure to liberalise their economies, privatise utilities and increase trade. These policies mostly favour large scale, fossil fuel dependent industries which are disconnected from local communities.

Food is at the heart of our cultures, traditions, landscapes, ecosystems and identity. It is too precious to be sold off. Eating local food connects us to where we live and to each other. It is also a powerful way to resist the dangerous model of industrial farming served up by the global economy.



Take Action!

...it's simple

- eat food grown as locally as possible to support small farmers
- join or start your own local food initiative
- cook and eat with friends - host a local food feast
- grow your own, even if it's just a window box
- reduce your meat consumption and eat only ethically grown animals
- support local and national efforts to resist corporate control of the food supply
- buy foods that have minimal processing
- contact your elected representatives and tell them you want them to oppose new agricultural trade agreements and instead invest in local communities
- while you're at it, tell them you also want proper labelling standards for genetically modified organisms and irradiated food
- insist on better protection of our soil, reefs and estuaries from industrial agriculture
- buy foods with minimal, recyclable packaging to reduce your waste
- talk to people about your concerns
- food and green waste in landfill causes toxic leaching - compost or start a wormfarm.

Make Contact

The following groups can support you to get in touch with local food and provide more information.

Australian City Farms & Community Gardens Network
www.communitygarden.org.au

Northey Street City Farm
homepage.powerup.com.au/~nscf/

CERES
www.ceres.org.au

SEED International
www.SEEDinternational.com.au

International Society for Ecology and Culture
www.isec.org.uk

Australian Community Foods
www.communityfoods.com.au

Seed Savers Network
www.seedsavers.net

Friends of the Earth
www.brisbane.foe.org.au

Food First
www.foodfirst.org



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SYDNEY FOOD FAIRNESS ALLIANCE

OUR CONTACT PEOPLE:

Communications - Rowena Yamazaki 02 9515 9736

rowena.duns@email.cs.nsw.gov.au

Advocacy - Lynne Saville 02 4560 5725 lsaville@chcs.com.au

Education - Jill Finnane 0427 279 199 jillf@erc.org.au

Planning - Monique Desmarchelier 02 4732 7523 mdesmarch@penrithcity.nsw.gov.au

If you would like to join the FFA listserv discussion email either:

fiona.campbell@randwick.nsw.gov.au or rowena.duns@email.cs.nsw.gov.au