

FOOD CITY

CITY OF MELBOURNE FOOD POLICY

PLANNING FOR THE
FUTURE OF OUR FOOD



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POLICY STATEMENT

The City of Melbourne recognises the impact food can have on our lives and our community – it contributes to our physical and mental health, can strengthen our local economy and foster cultural and social connection.

In our role as a leading local government, the City of Melbourne is committed to improving the health and wellbeing of our community through promoting a food system that is secure, healthy, sustainable, thriving and socially inclusive.

This policy provides us with a vision and framework to guide coordinated action and decision-making to ensure sufficient access to good food for all, now and into the future.



'Food is such an important part of the Melbourne lifestyle and experience. To me, food means sharing a fun meal with friends, catching a quick bite to eat before a show, lounging over a weekend lunch with my someone special.'

LAURA, RESIDENT/STUDENT/WORKER



'I love visits to the Victoria Market and farmers' markets, and getting really fresh vegetables and fish, free-range eggs, chicken and pork.'

MICHAEL, RESIDENT

INTRODUCTION

Melbourne is renowned for the quality of its food and we often assume we will always have plentiful access to good food. Our temperate climate allows a wide variety of foods to be grown close to Melbourne all year round. This ready food supply has drawn people to live and eat here for thousands of years, from the first Indigenous communities through to European settlers and the current population.

The way we eat is an important part of how we connect as people and communities, and also influences the strength of our local economy and the quality of our environment. The availability, accessibility and sustainability of healthy food is as essential to Melbourne's liveability as the quality of our public spaces, services and neighbourhoods.

The City of Melbourne has influenced the shape of our food system since its inception, when the first institutions of government were set up to enable the management of its markets. Our food now comes from all over the world. Vibrant markets, like the Queen Victoria Market, with its emphasis on fresh Australian produce, are still much loved features of the city.

There are however, signs that our food system is facing serious challenges, and the way we respond will shape the quality of life within the municipality for many years to come. The changing climate is having a noticeable impact on the reliability of food production, causing significant

fluctuations in the price of food. Resources such as oil, land and water are becoming scarcer and more expensive, increasing the cost of producing and transporting food and limiting where and how it can be grown. Simultaneously, there is increasing demand for food as the population grows. These challenges mean we can no longer take our food supply for granted.

Our attitude to food is undermining our health. Almost half of males and nearly a quarter of females within the municipality are now either overweight or obese, and diet-related illnesses, such as type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease, are increasing. Rising levels of chronic disease are related to changes in our environment and our lifestyle, including an increase in the availability and consumption of foods high in sugar, fat and salt. Most of us are not eating enough fruit and vegetables to meet our nutritional needs.

Many people within the City of Melbourne also face daily challenges in accessing enough healthy food for a healthy life. The people who are typically more vulnerable to poor food access or food insecurity include:

- > low income households (including single parents, sole person households, students, people who are unemployed)
- > older adults, particularly those who are frail or socially isolated
- > people with a disability or a mental illness
- > people with poor access to transport
- > people with a low proficiency in English, particularly new migrants and refugees
- > people in housing stress or who are homeless.

The challenges faced by these vulnerable groups in accessing sufficient food may worsen over time as natural resource constraints and climate stresses affect our food supply, leading to increases in the cost of food along with other essential household costs such as petrol and utility costs.

Some people are also experiencing increasing disruptions to their food supplies as a result of emergency situations. For example, extreme weather events can affect the food we have available to us. We also need to be prepared to support nearby communities who have suffered an emergency which has impacted their ability to access food.

A vibrant food economy thrives on diverse food supplies and business structures, the very qualities at the heart of Melbourne's food sector and multicultural food precincts.

We can draw on the city's unique character and flair for innovation as we work towards a healthy, sustainable, fair and thriving food system. For example, increasing the amount of food we produce in the municipality could strengthen community resilience, support education about food, maximise the use of available resources (like water and organic waste) as well as generate new businesses. Working together to create a new food system will shape who we are and have profound positive impacts on our quality of life, identity and culture for decades and centuries to come.

The City of Melbourne Food Policy recognises we need to work together to address the challenges facing our food system and to ensure we have sufficient access to good food for all, now and into the future. This policy is the result of significant work involving broad consultation with the community and stakeholders, identifying and analysing the issues and developing a vision and areas for action. It is also founded on a strong evidence base to ensure it aligns with current best-practice research in the field.

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

The policy provides an overarching vision and framework for the City of Melbourne that guides coordinated action and decision-making to improve our food system.

CITY OF MELBOURNE ROLE

We all have a role to play in creating a food system that is secure, healthy, sustainable, thriving and socially inclusive, including community, business, other organisations and all levels of government. The City of Melbourne cannot bring about this change alone, but there are areas where we can make an effective local contribution. Our roles include:

Education and Community Development

– providing information and supporting the development of skills that enable people to choose, grow, prepare and serve nutritious and sustainable food.

Leadership and Advocacy – leading by example through the food that we buy and make available and advocating for policy change at all levels of government.

Building and Strengthening Partnerships

– partnering with key players including community groups, local business, professional stakeholders and other levels of government.

Regulation and Infrastructure Management

– managing our statutory responsibilities as well as our resources and infrastructure (such as open spaces, waste management and public buildings) to support the development of a healthy, sustainable and fair food system.

Research – building an evidence base to guide action and decision-making including conducting research, collecting and interpreting data about food supply and consumption patterns and investigating barriers to change.



‘More food should be grown locally. In a high density area like the municipality of Melbourne, vertical gardens and roof top gardening (public and private) should be promoted.’

MELISSA, WORKER

VISION

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

THE CITY OF MELBOURNE WILL WORK WITH THE COMMUNITY AND OTHER PARTNERS TO ACHIEVE A FOOD SYSTEM WHERE:

- › Everyone in our community has access to sufficient nutritious, safe, fair and culturally appropriate food both now and in the future.
- › Our community embraces healthy eating and nutritious food.
- › The food we produce and consume improves our environment, regenerates our natural resource base and promotes sustainable and fair food practices.
- › Thriving and resilient food businesses and enterprises across the city and the state support strong local and regional economies.
- › We celebrate our diversity, multicultural food traditions and promote Melbourne as a city of great food.

THEMES AND AMBITIONS

Drawing on the results of the community consultation and research base, the City of Melbourne has identified the following five key themes and a set of ambitions to provide a framework for achieving the policy vision.

THEME 1

A STRONG, FOOD SECURE COMMUNITY

Access to nutritious and safe food is a basic human right, but for some people there are challenges in consistently being able to get the food they need on a daily basis. Food security can be improved if communities increase their capacity to grow and prepare their own food. It can also be improved when communities are empowered to guide change, and work in collaboration with local government and businesses to shape their local food system.

OUR AMBITIONS ARE TO:

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

Actions to meet these ambitions could include: establishing a food policy committee or partnership forum that embeds community and business participation in shaping Melbourne's food system, and creating opportunities for everyone to learn about good food – how to grow it, cook it and eat it.



'Being able to access food is a basic human right. Food = Life'

EMILY, WORKER

THEME 2

HEALTHY FOOD CHOICES FOR ALL

Increasing the availability of nutritious, sustainable and safe food within the city supports the health and wellbeing of people now and into the future. Raising awareness about the principles of a healthy, sustainable diet also enables people to make food choices that enhance their health and wellbeing.

OUR AMBITIONS ARE TO:

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

Actions to meet these ambitions could include: developing healthy and sustainable procurement standards for food purchased by the City of Melbourne; giving awards for community programs that increase production and consumption of sustainably produced, seasonal fruit and vegetables; investigate ways to raise awareness around genetically modified food; and providing accessible food safety resources and support to businesses and community groups.

'It means a lot of energy.
Food helps your body.'

CAITLIN (AGE 7), RESIDENT



THEME 3

A SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENT FOOD SYSTEM

By supporting sustainable food production and consumption within the city and nearby regions we can reduce the negative environmental impacts of Melbourne's food system and enhance our future food security.

OUR AMBITIONS ARE TO:

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

Actions to meet these ambitions could include: advocating for the preservation of prime agricultural land on Melbourne's fringe; educating households and food businesses to reduce food waste; supporting innovative forms of local agriculture; and identifying opportunities to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions associated with Melbourne's food consumption.



‘Can we keep expecting so much variety and availability year round?
Can we continue wasting so much food?’

JULIA, RESIDENT

THEME 4

A THRIVING LOCAL FOOD ECONOMY

Our thriving food sector provides a rich range of employment opportunities, strengthening our local economy. Increasing the opportunities to buy fresh, seasonal foods from Victorian producers also supports our regional economy and enhances the quality and character of the food sector within Melbourne.

OUR AMBITIONS ARE TO:

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

Actions to meet these ambitions could include: developing existing assets like the Queen Victoria Market as food hubs that facilitate business and community access to sustainable, regional food; encouraging and fostering small independent food businesses and social enterprise; and working with existing city food businesses to enhance and promote the availability of healthy food choices.



THEME 5

A CITY THAT CELEBRATES FOOD

The experience of sharing meals and eating together is an important part of life and connects us with others. Melbourne is a city that loves to celebrate food through its markets and restaurants, its festivals and in the everyday shared celebrations that take place within our culturally diverse community.

OUR AMBITIONS ARE TO:

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

Actions to meet these ambitions could include: celebrating and promoting the changing food seasons through events and activities; providing facilities that encourage sharing of food, such as community kitchens, cooking facilities and tables in shared spaces; encouraging the celebration of Indigenous and other culturally diverse food cultures; and increasing the range of healthy eating options at events.



'Food is more than just a meal - it is about bringing people together and sharing conversations.'

JIM, WORKER



IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION

This policy will be implemented through an action plan which outlines timelines for achievement, resources required and responsibilities for delivery. This policy will also undergo a process of regular review to ensure its effectiveness in meeting the policy aim and vision. This will include a process of evaluation which measures what has been completed and the effect of the work on the community and the local food system.

Progress and outcomes of the policy will be reported back to the Melbourne City Council and community at regular intervals.

ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

CHALLENGES:

5,000

adults ran out of food and were unable to afford more in the last 12 months^[1].

22%

of people say that the high cost of food prevents them from accessing the quality and variety they want^[1].

Many people rely on emergency food relief services^[11].

EXISTING ASSETS:

Diverse food businesses^[3].

\$108m

spent annually on food and beverage by business tourists^[7].



The city's food services industry employs around

30,000

people and generates over

\$700m

to Melbourne's economy [2009–10]^[6].

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

CHALLENGES:

People find healthy food difficult to access^[2].

Some areas have poor access to supermarkets^[2].

The fast food sector in the central city has grown by

OVER 50%
IN THE PAST DECADE^[4].

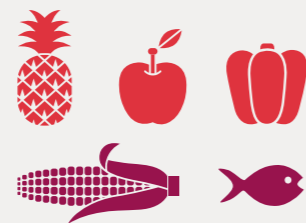


1 IN 3

city users consume fast food when they are in the city^[4].

EXISTING ASSETS:

The Queen Victoria Market is the municipality's best source of fresh food^[3].



Melbourne has good public transport and high quality networks for walking and cycling^[3].



NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

CHALLENGES:

People want more opportunities to grow food^[3].

People are worried about food quality and the use of synthetic chemicals and genetic modification^[3].

40,000

tonnes of organic waste from food and retail services^[4].



40%

of household rubbish sent to landfill in Melbourne is organic waste^[5].

EXISTING ASSETS:

Rooftops cover

90%

of the Melbourne CBD area^[8].



70%

of the potable water needs could be met by stormwater and roof-water runoff^[9].

Many active food rescue organisations^[3].

SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

CHALLENGES:

95%

of adults don't eat enough vegetables.

46%

of adults don't eat enough fruit^[1].

34%

of males are overweight

14%

of females are overweight

10%

of males are obese

11%

of females are obese^[1]

People want knowledge and skills to cook and eat well^[3].

People say they don't have time to cook^[3].

EXISTING ASSETS:

Rich diversity of cultural foods^[3].

Melbourne's food is a major draw-card for the tourism industry, with eating out in the 'restaurant capital' the top thing to do for both international and domestic tourists^[10].

ALL FIGURES RELATE TO THE CITY OF MELBOURNE MUNICIPAL AREA

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Acknowledgements:

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GLOSSARY

Fair food

Food that is adequately priced for farmers and consumers provided through a supply chain that has fair working conditions and high standards of animal welfare.

Food access

Food access refers to the ability of individuals, households and communities to access and use the food supply available to them. Adequate access to the food supply is defined as access to quality food in local communities which is safe, affordable, culturally and environmentally acceptable and nutritious. People experience good access when healthy food choices are within walking distance (400–500 metres in urban areas) or by readily available, frequent and affordable public transport.

Food security

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

When people do not have access to the food they need, this is defined as food insecurity.

Food supply

A sustainable food supply is one that provides healthy food to meet current food needs. It is also important that healthy ecosystems are maintained to provide food for generations to come with minimal negative impact on the environment.

Food system

The chain of activities beginning with the production of food and moving on to include the processing, distributing, wholesaling, retailing and consumption of food and eventually the disposal of waste.

Healthy food

Healthy diets are those that are high in fresh, plant based foods such as fruits and vegetables, nuts and legumes and lower in meat and animal products. This can include a focus on organically-produced foods which are not genetically modified and are chemical free.

Resilience

The resilience of a system refers to how effectively it can respond to shock and adapt to change while still continuing to provide food.

Safe food

Safe food has been prepared, manufactured, stored and transported so it arrives at the consumer unadulterated, fit for human consumption and does not cause food poisoning. Food is said to be unsafe when it causes harm after consumption.

Sustainable food

Sustainable food is produced in a way that regenerates or improves the natural environment. It comes to our plates through short, efficient and fair supply chains which make healthy food affordable for all people and provides fair returns to farmers.

How to contact us

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