



Better Food Where People Live

Centre for People, Place and Planet Research Impact Case Study

ABOUT THE WORK

Our research on food production, access, and policy enables regional Western Australian communities to have better food where they live, contributing to improved food availability, cost and quality across regional and remote Western Australia. Our work informs better food production methods, better strategies to support access, and better food quality. The Centre for People, Place, and Planet has connected our researchers with partners to undertake research and guide recommendations, including international, state, and local governments, not-for-profit organisations, food grower groups, social enterprises, and advocacy organisations.

The Better Food Program (2015-2025) has received funding totalling \$771,278 from Healthway, the Department of Health WA's Future Health Research and Innovation Fund, and the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.

OUR RESEARCH IMPACT

Benefits for farmers and regional communities

We are working towards more local, regional, and sustainable food systems, benefiting both consumers and farming groups. We facilitate the transition towards more effective ways of supporting food availability and access among government and community organisations. This strengthens their ability to implement policy and deliver programs for regional communities. We emphasise the transitioning of farming

techniques and practices into more widespread adoption: shifting food production methods towards incorporating more sustainable farming methods and being drought resilient by keeping water in the landscape. This promotes healthy farms, healthy farmers, and healthy communities.

Improving food security policies and practice

Our food security systems research implemented 25 changes to practice among South West region government and community initiatives. By increasing collaboration, duplication among food security programs has been reduced. We have facilitated governments to consult community members to include their ideas in local government work, and we have highlighted to them the need to address food security in policies. Overall, this has increased strategic alignment of community projects with local government strategies, and reportedly led to increased local government funding. For example, a Food Community participant said:

“It was... a really helpful way to think outside the box and start to actually think about ways in improving things we are already doing in our day-to-day jobs.”

At a policy level, our research has been cited in state and federal government inquiries, specifically the Inquiry into the most effective ways for Western Australia to address food insecurity for children and young people affected by poverty (WA), Climate and Health Inquiry (WA), Inquiry into food pricing and food security in remote communities (Federal), and Inquiry into Food Security in Australia (Federal). We have delivered invited WA parliamentary briefings on COVID-19 and food security, and effective strategies to support food security among children, and First Nations Australians. We have been engaged by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) to advise on the measurement of food insecurity at a national level. As a direct result of researcher advocacy, the 2022-23 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS), 2023 National Nutrition and Physical Activity Survey (NNPAS), and 2023 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nutrition and Physical Activity Survey (NATSINPAS) will include a comprehensive, validated tool to measure food security and has adopted a recommended data analysis strategy. The ABS advised:

“The ABS has considered this feedback and supports all of the recommendations.”

Dr Stephanie Godrich recently provided evidence at an [Inquiry Hearing](#) and provided Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People Members with specific guidance about the building of local or regional food systems. Members have advised the evidence provided changed their thinking about food systems:

“You are looking after the future of our youth and children in Western Australia.”

CPPP Research Engagement and Impact Pathway

The Centre for People, Place, and Planet values research where the people and communities for whom the research is important – are involved and participate from the outset of the work. The Centre also sees building collaborations and partnerships between academic specialists and external stakeholders in a range of industry sectors and community contexts, as essential. The Centre’s interdisciplinary approach involving social justice, ecology, the arts, public health, education and business – planetary health to some – is an appealing prospect for partners who have traditionally been rooted in the agriculture or public health sectors.

Community engagement

We have engaged over 300 stakeholders representing agriculture, policy, community development, health, education, and social justice sectors. Communicating widely through local and regional media outlets throughout WA, we have held seven face-to-face/hybrid public forums in all seven regions of Western Australia to formulate recommendations and develop food security action plans. In over 50 workshops with non-government and government teams, we have discussed how our research could be integrated in their workplans. Our work has been incorporated into the National Heart Foundation’s award-winning Healthy

Active by Design project. This informed evidence supports town planners and built environment professionals to design communities that maximise healthy, affordable food access.

Future research directions

Partnerships will continue to be critical to our research. Our newer projects, for example 'Food Action Groups' project, have significant potential to inform local government Public Health Plans, state health and wellbeing plans. Our work to understand whether Food Action Groups could be transferrable from an international context to our regional and remote WA context will guide the formation of a food governance mechanism to drive the development of local and regional food systems. The potential outcomes are transformative actions to fund and support local and regional food systems, such as increasing food system equity, increasing knowledge and cooking skills/demand for healthy food, increased food access, increased environmental sustainability, increased economic development (e.g. retaining economic value of agriculture and horticulture produce in regional areas), increased food system resiliency. Collectively, these outcomes will support long-lasting social, economic, and environmental impact that ensures better food for everyone, regardless of where they live in Western Australia.

References

Godrich, S., Lo, J., Kent, K., Romero Macau, F., Devine, A. (2022). A mixed-methods study to determine the impact of COVID-19 on food security, food access and supply in regional Australia for consumers and food supply stakeholders. *Nutrition Journal*, 21(1), article number 17. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12937-022-00770-4>.

Godrich, S., Stoneham, M., Edmunds, M., Devine, A. (2020). South West Food Community: how government and community initiatives are supporting systemic change towards enhanced food security. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 44(2), 129-136. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1753-6405.12975>.

Sambell, R., Andrew, L., **Godrich, S.**, Wolfgang, J., Vandenbroeck, D., Stuble, K., Rose, N., Newman, L., **Horwitz, P.** and Devine, A. (2019). Local challenges and successes associated with transitioning to sustainable food system practices for a west Australian context: Multi-sector stakeholder perceptions. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 16(11), p.2051.