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## Thinking globally, acting locally: Supporting systems change within communities to enhance food security action

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Food systems are complex, with a multitude of drivers including climate change, income markets, policy, social norms, and demography. Within food systems, food supply chain activities influence food resources, and in turn, diets. More broadly, economic, social, and environmental impacts dictate a person's dietary quantity, quality, diversity, safety, and adequacy.<sup>(1)</sup> Food security is a term describing a situation where everyone has physical, social, and economic access to nutritious food which meets their dietary needs, and food preferences. Not only does food need to be available, accessible, utilised, stable, but also sustainable.<sup>(1)</sup> However, in a global context, food systems are fraught with issues threatening food security, including shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic,<sup>(2)</sup> and war. Globally, 2020 food prices were higher than in the previous six years. Within Australia, we lack food system resiliency due to a casualised workforce, reliance on international workers, a concentration of supermarket power, and widening inequities, among others. Evidence suggests that Australia will not meet global targets to achieve the 'Zero Hunger' 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. We face an incredible challenge; to feed an increasing population sustainably. Local food systems, also known as 'alternative food networks', are often sold for local or regional markets.<sup>(3)</sup> Australian research reported barriers to purchasing and consuming more locally grown food such as affordability, limited availability, and a lack of interest. While enablers included altruistic reasons such as financially supporting farmers, personal health perceptions or an environmental contribution.<sup>(4)</sup> Evidence suggests local food systems encourage seasonal eating and dietary diversity, connect consumers and producers, and increase food system resiliency.<sup>(5,6)</sup> This presentation asserts that communities must participate in shaping the food systems which impact their food security. Food Policy Groups (FPG) are a potential mechanism to involve community and food system stakeholders in driving such actions forward. These inter-agency alliances focus on impact areas such as food access, equity, and food system resiliency. A scoping review was undertaken in August–November 2022, to synthesise the literature describing the impact of FPG on local food systems within high-income countries. A total of 355 peer-reviewed and grey literature sources were imported into Covidence for screening; 31 duplicates were removed, 324 sources were screened, 146 full-text sources assessed for eligibility. Thirty-one sources with evaluation evidence demonstrating their impact were extracted. FPG focused on increasing food system equity, such as distributing culturally appropriate food; increased access to healthy food, such as successfully advocating for food objectives to be written into local food system plans; supporting food system resiliency, such as achieving local food procurement in schools. The international evidence suggests FPG are impactful across several food system aspects. Future research will examine whether FPG could be an effective mechanism for local food system change in Australia.

### References

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