

# A Snapshot of Food Security in Whangarei

**NORTHLAND DISTRICT  
HEALTH BOARD**  
*Te Poari Hauora Ā Rohe O Te Taitokerau*



**Food Security is an issue that affects all of us. It reflects our ability to access, afford and consume healthy food throughout our lifespan.**

Last summer, Northland District Health Board (NDHB) had the privilege of partnering with the University of Auckland, Te Kupenga Hauora Māori Summer Studentship Scholarship Programme. For 10 weeks, a 3rd year medical student undertook an exciting project with NDHB to get a picture of what food security meant for the people residing in four communities (Onerahi (Sherwood area), Otangarei, Raumanga, and Tikipunga) in Whangarei.



To hear the real stories of those closely affected by food insecurity a 'kitchen table approach' was chosen when spending time with community participants. As part of this approach, a **facilitator** sat down with community participants and openly discussed food security and what it meant for them. A list of questions guided this discussion, which were developed based on an initial literature review of national and international food security studies. A koha was given to participants in recognition of their time and knowledge they shared.

The majority of stakeholders and key contacts approached were receptive to the project and were willing to help however they could. Stakeholders were those who were directly or indirectly involved with creating a food secure environment such as local growers and food co-ops, community gardens, the Salvation Army, soup kitchens, dairy owners and community health centres. Stakeholders were also interviewed to find out about their experiences of strengths and challenges with addressing food security.

The most valuable help from our contacts was linking up with community participants who could share their perception on food security and their lived realities. A challenge that arose was making sure our meeting times were suitable for our community participants.

## Interesting Findings:

### Food Suppliers:

- ☞ A notable strength was the interaction between food suppliers, and a mutual respect for their actions. For example, a surplus from a fresh food collective was regularly donated to a soup kitchen for use.
- ☞ A fresh food collective operating in the region had a reasonable clientele but seemed to struggle to reach high deprivation communities. Interviews with community participants revealed that a lack of internet meant that they could not access the fresh food collective, as the internet was needed to make orders.

### Community Participants:

- ☞ Community participants were often unaware of community gardens in their neighbourhood.
- ☞ One participant commented that it was possible to live 'off the land', but only if you knew how, signalling the perceived need for more hands on teaching of horticulture.

**Collecting the stories, perceptions and the desires of the community participants was extremely important. While there are numerous ways to approach food security, understanding what your community wants and needs, will make a difference and is an invaluable step prior to any intervention.**

## Next steps...

NDHB look forward to continuing to build our relationship with communities who have provided insight into this food security snapshot. The Tai Tokerau Childhood Obesity Prevention Framework, under Fit for Life, has identified food security as one of its work streams. Fit for Life will use this snapshot to direct further research in this area, and for example investigate the feasibility of introducing a food rescue programme in Whangarei in the future.

### Acknowledgements:

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