

GROWING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES: A FOOD SECURITY TOOLKIT FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

At the recent ANA conference, Sarah Stevenson, Health Improvement Advisor from Toi Te Ora – Public Health Service (Toi Te Ora), presented the ‘Growing Healthy Communities – Food Security Toolkit for Local Government’. Toi Te Ora developed the toolkit after a literature review showed a need to present food security policies and strategies in a user friendly way for the local government to act upon.



The toolkit contains a collection of potential strategies, advocacy opportunities and policies targeting local government action to improve their community’s food security. The toolkit is divided into four main sections that represent the four spheres of influence to improve food security: Collaboration, Community Capacity, Supportive Environments and Advocacy.

Each sphere has an accompanying list of strategies with recommendations for local government to use. “The key to successful food security work is the consideration of all four spheres,” says Sarah.



The final two sections of the toolkit provide a visionary strategy and an appendix. The ‘looking forward’ visionary section looks at fast food outlet density and proximity. The appendix contains practical sample policies for use by councils and a ‘useful resources’ section which contains links to documents and websites that could assist councils to adopt the strategies in the toolkit, the community who may lead initiatives or link with council, as well as providing extra information and examples from other councils.

“The sample policies are ready to be used by any council. For example, the council just needs to insert their name and a few details and they will have a draft community gardens policy ready for consultation,” says Sarah.

It is envisaged that this toolkit be actively used by council planners and interested community organisations to advocate for and develop policies, strategies and plans that will ultimately empower their communities to have better access to affordable, healthy, safe and sustainable food sources. It also offers councils a range of solutions to support food security whilst staying within their restrictions (such as the Local Government Act). “The strategies in the toolkit have been tried and tested nationally or internationally.” says Sarah.

Councils can use some or all of the tools within this resource over time to help connect residents with healthy food, stimulate local economy and positive social outcomes. It is envisaged that this resource will assist planners and policy developers, by utilising the sample policies in the appendix and the evidence provided.

“It is by no means a resource that contains everything that a local government can do to improve access to reliable, healthy, sustainable and safe food sources for their communities, but provides a great way to start putting this on the council agenda” says Sarah.

The toolkit is currently being concept tested, which has so far been positively received. Release of the final toolkit via the Toi Te Ora website and in print is expected by July 2013.

“From small things, big things can grow!,” says Sarah. 🌱

For more information on the Food Security Toolkit for Local Government contact Sarah Stevenson on:
Sarah.Stevenson@bopdhb.govt.nz