

# Program Overview

## February 2022

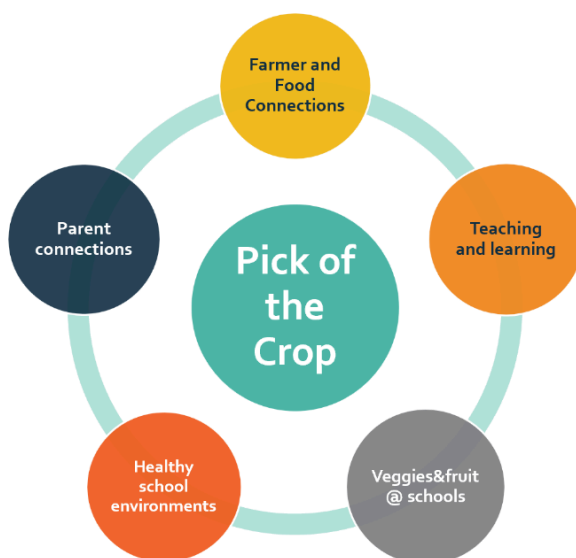


**Pick of the Crop is a whole of school healthy eating program developed by Health and Wellbeing Queensland (HWQld). The long term aim is to increase vegetable and fruit intake among primary school-aged children.**

The program is consistent with the latest Australian and international evidence of good practice, that supports school communities to create environments for students to learn about and make healthy food and drink choices. It is also consistent with the Department of Education's *Smart Choices – Healthy Food and Drink Supply strategy for Queensland Schools*.

### Program aim and objectives

Pick of the Crop aims to complement and build on schools' current actions and priorities. The program focuses on five key components: learning with local growers and producers; embedding food and nutrition across key learning areas in the curriculum; supporting healthy school environments; influencing food and drink supply in schools; and connecting with parents, families and communities.



### Implementation

In 2022, up to 100 schools can participate in Pick of the Crop following its successful pilot in 2021. More schools, with a potential reach of 35,000 students, across Bundaberg and Wide Bay region, Bowen and Burdekin region and Logan are now able to sign up to the program.

Demonstrated commitment from the school leadership team is essential to the Pick of the Crop's success, with 'School Champions' identified to pioneer the program in schools.

### Regional coordinators

Three coordinators work alongside HWQld and partners in the regions. They:

- Recruit schools and assist with co-designing and implementing locally driven School Action Plans
- Highlight opportunities for schools to increase student's opportunity to taste and learn about vegetables or fruit during each school day.
- Act on feedback from schools, working with HWQld to develop resources for use in schools or connect with other partners, programs or stakeholders.

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### Integrated support



### Findings from 2021 pilot program

35 schools from the three Pick of the Crop regions participated in the 2021 pilot, reaching over 10,000 students. Comprehensive evaluation assessed the approach of the program and determined its' impact in schools.

#### Summary:

- The autonomy of Pick of the Crop allowed schools to implement and tailor activities to meet their specific needs, contexts and resources. This was seen as a key strength.
  - Boost funding is key. Schools used this to fund establishment of enhancing existing infrastructure such as school gardens or equipment, which many schools leveraged with other grants or donations.
  - Schools reported an improvement in student knowledge and skills on vegetables and fruit as well as improved attitudes, with students willing to try more vegetables and fruit.
  - Teachers reported they had an improved knowledge on vegetables and fruit, and improved
- For more information see <https://hw.qld.gov.au/pick-of-the-crop/>

attitudes to integrate food and nutrition content in their lessons or classroom practices.

- Support is essential, particularly during the early stages of implementation. This continues to be provided by the regional coordinators.
- Schools implemented a range of activities related to the five components of Pick of the Crop, with the majority being in the 'Healthy schools environments' component.
- Improved availability of vegetables and fruit at schools were achieved through school gardens, classroom snack initiatives, tuckshop reviews, connections with farmers and food growers.
- The crowded curriculum, competing priorities and stretched staff resources all pose ongoing challenges to implementation of Pick of the Crop.

### Rationale

Most Queensland children do not meet the recommendations for healthy eating, with only 4.6% of 5-17 year olds eating enough vegetables and 68.4% eating enough fruit<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Queensland Government. Queensland survey analytic system (QSAS). <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/phsurvey>. Accessed 14 July 2021