

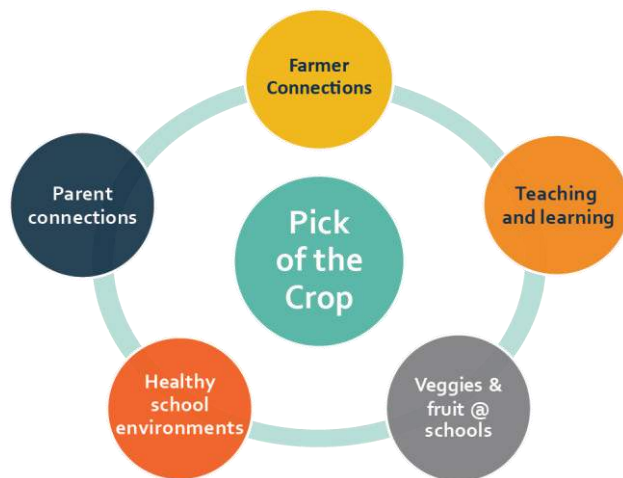
# Evaluation highlights

## 2021



### Summary of program

*Pick of the Crop* is a whole school healthy eating program developed by Health and Wellbeing Queensland (HWQld) to increase opportunities for primary school students in Queensland to learn about and eat more vegetables and fruit. Schools participate in the program by developing locally designed actions around five components:



The program was piloted with 35 schools in 2021, reaching over 10,000 students.

### The evaluation process

The pilot was evaluated in partnership with the Institute for Social Science Research (ISSR), The University of Queensland. The aims of the 2021 evaluation were to:

- Understand if *Pick of the Crop* is feasible for, and acceptable to, schools.
- Capture the activities and immediate impacts of *Pick of the Crop* in participating schools.
- Gain an understanding of barriers and enablers to *Pick of the Crop* implementation.
- Inform future investment decisions.

### PILOT REGIONS



The evaluation was co-developed between ISSR, HWQld and *Pick of the Crop* staff, guided by a co-designed Program Logic.

From the three pilot regions (Bowen, Bundaberg and Logan), 31 schools were invited to participate in the evaluation. Evaluation findings were based on the following data sources:

- 25 School Action Plans, which captured details on schools' *planned* activities, the budget for each of the five program components and the school staff responsible for implementing the activities.
- 19 Summary of Achievement Surveys, which captured the *actual* activities implemented by schools as part of *Pick of the Crop*, what worked well, and what could be improved.
- 15 Outcome Surveys, which captured perspectives on the impacts that implementing *Pick of the Crop* had on students, staff, parents, and the school environment.
- 8 interviews with school *Pick of the Crop* champions, which used the Most Significant Change method to collect, discuss and select participants' stories of change.
- An online focus group with *Pick of the Crop* Regional Coordinators, which captured their perspectives of supporting schools to implement the program.



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### Findings

**235** school actions

were implemented as part of the *Pick of the Crop* pilot program, with grant funding used across all five components.

“When we opened the classroom for Father’s Day, we even had grandfathers who were amazed at what the kids had experienced and that kids in the classroom with their peers were willing to try vegetables whereas at home kids wouldn’t eat vegetables.”

“At our school the *Pick of the Crop* program is delivered through the health and physical education.”

“The kids thoroughly enjoyed learning on each farm. Parents have contacted me to say how excited their children were - coming home to share lots of information and, of course, the lettuces and avocados.”

“We implemented ‘munch and crunch’ fruit snack breaks across the school. When I started it was only happening in my room and maybe one or two other classes. With *Pick of the Crop*, our Principal said “ok, this is something that needs to happen in every room”.”

“We had a few raised garden beds around the school, but they weren’t being used. I asked the groundskeeper to put all of the garden beds into one area to create the school garden. The real hero of our *Pick of the Crop* story is the school garden.”



### Knowledge and attitudes

**64%** of schools strongly agreed  
All schools agreed that *Pick of the Crop* improved knowledge and attitudes towards vegetable and fruits among students

“Kids are more open and willing to have a go at it. For me the most important change is the kids’ willingness to try different vegetables and fruit and to see the kids learning the skills for how to cook. You know that is a life skill and if they have that skill now hopefully that will translate into real life when they grow up.”

### Teaching and learning

**62%** of schools strongly agreed  
All schools agreed that *Pick of the Crop* improved the quality and quantity of food and nutrition content taught at their school

“What worked much better in our school were those opportunities that teachers found to weave in fruit and vegetable content to the curriculum and ways to align content with units as opposed to adding on additional content.”

### Opportunities to try vegetables and fruit

**58%** of schools strongly agreed  
The majority of schools agreed that *Pick of the Crop* improved the availability of vegetables and fruit at school and school events



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### Summary of evaluation findings

*Pick of the Crop* is a highly valued and feasible program to achieve impact in complex school environments. It resulted in the outputs and immediate impacts needed for long-term change in vegetable and fruit consumption among students.

*As a result of Pick of the Crop, I have noticed that students are much more willing to try different fruit and vegetables.*  
(Principal)

### Barriers

- School level - limited time and capacity, crowded curriculum and competing priorities
- Support required for garden maintenance and student supervision and limited knowledge of what to plant and when
- Fast food culture embedded within and valued by some families and stakeholders
- COVID pandemic reduced parent connections and on-site activities, and farms were often closed to school visits.

*I think PoC is worthwhile, but the trickiest thing is 'how does it become sustainable?', that is always the challenge.*

### Enablers

- School leadership support
- Small grants to implement School Action Plans and leverage other funding
- Regional Coordinator support
- School Action Plans co-designed with Regional Coordinators
- *Pick of the Crop* branding and stories of success
- Program flexibility allowed schools to prioritise activities to meet their needs and contexts.

*Without the regional coordinator, I probably wouldn't have done it, but knowing that she was walking the journey with me and the school made it possible.*



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### Key recommendations

#### Action Plans

Support schools to set realistic expectations in their *Pick of the Crop* action plans, acknowledging the time and resource implications of different activities and opportunities for integration within existing work.

#### School resources

Provide factsheets to support implementation and advocacy, including: ideas to integrate *Pick of the Crop* across the curriculum; information on what to plant and grow during different school terms; stories of success; complementary programs; and cheat sheets of practical advice when engaging with and visiting farms.

Support schools to enhance engagement with parents through branded communication, promotional events, and interactive sessions with feedback and insights collected.

#### Sustainability

Support schools to conduct succession planning to continue *Pick of the Crop* with less support and reduced funding, including raising awareness about funding/donation and network opportunities.



### Evaluation

Future evaluations should consider collecting data and perspectives from other relevant stakeholders such as other members of school staff, parents and farmers engaging with schools as part of *Pick of the Crop*, as well as students.



### Future of *Pick of the Crop*

*Pick of the Crop* continues to be implemented in 63 schools in 2022, reaching over 16,000 primary school students in Bowen and the Burdekin, Bundaberg and Wide Bay, Logan and in other regions of Queensland.

Further evaluation of the program is being undertaken, focused on sustainability and scalability. Findings will be reported in 2023.

#### 2021 Evaluation Contributors:

- HWQld - Mathew Dick, Li Kheng Chai, Charlotte Morrison
- Regional Coordinators - Jenna McCormick, Olivia Gordon, Katherine Cacavas
- Partners - Bree Grima, Bundaberg Fruit and Vegetable Growers; Christien Payne, Principal, Bowen State School
- ISSR – Dr Anne Cleary, Dr Mark Robinson, Prof Lisa McDaid

#### Additional Information

The results showing the level of agreement are based on the average (median) response to multiple survey items related to the same outcome.

[www.hw.qld.gov.au/pick-of-the-crop](http://www.hw.qld.gov.au/pick-of-the-crop)