gather + grow

Gather + Grow
Action Plan 2023–2026

OCTOBER 2023

health + wellbeing
Queensland

Queensland
Government

Language

Throughout Gather + Grow 2023–2032 (the Strategy), 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' is respectfully used to describe the First Peoples of the lands and waters now known as Australia. Where it is part of a title or quote, the term 'Indigenous' is, at times, used to describe Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. With respect, Health and Wellbeing Queensland recognises the distinctly different cultures and histories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples described by this term.

Health and Wellbeing Queensland is mindful of the negative ways in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are often discussed. Such discourse undermines the complex determinants of inequity while inflating measures that highlight and reinforce disadvantage. In producing the Strategy, Health and Wellbeing Queensland has made a conscious effort to avoid negative perceptions and language while acknowledging the challenges experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Terms and definitions

To make this document easier to read, key terms and their definitions are included at page 19.

Gather + Grow

Gather + Grow does not just refer to the gathering and growing of food, but also recognises the importance of actions required to support communities to be food secure by:

- gathering friends and stakeholders, momentum, effort and opportunities to address food security; and

- growing the workforce, capacity or resources to address food security.

The basket weave associated with Gather + Grow is representative of, not only a vessel that carries food, but also an arrangement that consists of multiple strands or partners that, when woven together, will create a strong structure that supports food security across remote communities. The name and branding of Gather + Grow were consulted on with members from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Disclaimer

This document has been prepared with all due diligence and care, based on the best available information at the time of publication. Health and Wellbeing Queensland holds no responsibility for any errors or omissions within this document. Any decisions made by other parties based on this document are solely the responsibility of those parties. Information contained in this document is from a number of sources and, as such, does not necessarily represent government or departmental policy.

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Artwork

Making Tracks artwork produced for Queensland Health by Gilimbaa.

Acknowledgement

Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Health and Wellbeing Queensland respectfully acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands, winds and waters where Queenslanders live, learn and work. Health and Wellbeing Queensland recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of Australia, representing distinctly different groups with unique cultures, histories, knowledges and connections to Country. Health and Wellbeing Queensland pays our respects to, and acknowledges, Elders, past and present. As they hold the memories, traditions, cultures and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and have taken on the responsibility to protect and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, leaving a legacy for future Elders and leaders. Health and Wellbeing Queensland acknowledges any Sorry Business that may be affecting individuals, families and communities.

Health and Wellbeing Queensland recognises and respects the common strengths demonstrated across Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. In particular, the resourcefulness and enduring resilience Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, families and communities continue to demonstrate. Health and Wellbeing Queensland acknowledges the long-standing relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and traditional foods and recognise that colonisation has forcibly disrupted this. Health and Wellbeing Queensland recognises that Australia was once a food sovereign nation. For more than 60,000 years, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples hunted, fished, gathered, grew, prepared and shared food, in ways that promoted planetary and human health. Today Queensland's food system is very different, and in many ways, contributes to and reinforces food insecurity in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Therefore, working towards food security means systematically removing the barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination imposed by colonisation. Health and Wellbeing Queensland acknowledges that the impacts of colonisation mean that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples continue to fight for sovereignty of land and food.

Health and Wellbeing Queensland thanks and acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who have contributed to and led this work.

Our commitment

Health and Wellbeing Queensland commits to being respectful and takes our lead from the community to walk together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the journey to better health, equity and food security. Health and Wellbeing Queensland acknowledges the Uluru Statement from the Heart and Path to Treaty. As a statutory body of the Queensland Government, Health and Wellbeing Queensland is aware of the work needed to reframe our relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This can only begin with truth-telling about the historical and ongoing relationship between government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Health and Wellbeing Queensland continues its commitment to reflecting the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in every step of this journey.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories are rich and diverse, and Health and Wellbeing Queensland recognises our responsibility to facilitate efforts that account for this and ensure equity for all.

Health and Wellbeing Queensland celebrates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander strength, resilience and courage which has endured over time and now inspires current and future generations. Health and Wellbeing Queensland acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander events of significance such as National Reconciliation Week and Closing the Gap Day. Health and Wellbeing Queensland is also building organisational cultural capability through a Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan.

Health and Wellbeing Queensland recognises and supports the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, which can only be achieved with new ways of thinking and working that share leadership. The Strategy supports the Queensland Government's commitment to achieving targets and priority reforms under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. Health and Wellbeing Queensland supports the Queensland Government Reconciliation Action Plan 2023–2025, Queensland Health's Making Tracks towards closing the gap in health outcomes for Indigenous Queenslanders by 2033 and Queensland's 2022 Closing the Gap Implementation Plan.

Contents

Introduction

The Gather + Grow Queensland Remote Food Security Strategy 2023–2032 (Gather + Grow 2023–2032) is the Queensland Government's long-term plan to improve and sustain food security in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The Gather + Grow Action Plan 2023–2026 (the Plan) is the first in a series of action plans. The purpose of the Plan is to focus on cultivating collective leadership, shared action and outline the steps that the Queensland Government will take to establish strong foundations for systems change. The Plan acknowledges the need to prioritise those with the greatest capacity to benefit and will work with local communities to deliver community-informed and place-based solutions.

The Plan will be achieved through actions that deliver against Gather + Grow's 4 priority areas:

- optimising **supply chain** performance, resilience and **logistics** to ensure quality, affordable, healthy food is consistently available year-round

- improving the accessibility and availability of healthy food by creating supportive settings for sustainable **local food production**

- empowering **communities** to choose and prepare healthy food by building awareness, capability and environments for good nutrition

- supporting **healthy homes** that enable communities to prepare, consume and store healthy foods with reliable and working appliances and facilities (such as fridges, cooktops and running water).

Partners from across the Queensland Government will lead the implementation of the Plan through shared leadership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, working together across government and with a diverse range of sectors (including industry, universities and not-for-profit).

Together, the Queensland Government will create meaningful and sustainable change by delivering action across the 4 priority areas.

Food security in Far North Queensland and Lower Gulf

Food security is when all people, at all times, have access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their cultural preferences and needs for an active and healthy life.[1] It is a complex issue and one that affects people differently across Queensland. For example, some remote communities in North Queensland are twice as likely to experience food insecurity compared with communities in Brisbane.[2] This difference is driven by many factors such as limited not-for-profit food relief services, reduced economic opportunity, extreme climates and poor infrastructure.

The Plan focusses on delivering action for those that will benefit the most, primarily remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the Torres Strait, Cape York,

Northern Peninsula Area and Lower Gulf regions (hereafter, referred to as Far North Queensland and Lower Gulf). Due to system-wide challenges, these communities experience greater barriers to food security compared with the rest of Queensland.

Of the 19 discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Queensland, 13 are situated in the remote and very remote regions of Far North Queensland and Lower Gulf. Each of these communities are represented in the Torres and Cape Indigenous Council Alliance, a regional organisation of local governing authorities. The Torres and Cape Indigenous Council Alliance is a food security leader in Far North Queensland and Lower Gulf, and a key partner in delivery of the Plan.

Place and people

15 year gap in health-adjusted life expectancy compared with the Queensland average.[1]

100% of the Far North Queensland and Lower Gulf region is classified as **remote or very remote.**[3]

68.7% of the population identifies as **Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander** in Far North Queensland (excluding Lower Gulf).[4]

One third (32.9%) of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population **are children** (0-14 years) in Far North Queensland (excludes Lower Gulf).[4]

Queensland is not on track to meet Closing the Gap Targets around life expectancy.[5]

The gap in life expectancy between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, compared with non-Indigenous Australians, is **8.6 years for males and 7.8 years for females.**[6]

Regional Food Security Challenges

23.5% of the population are experiencing **unemployment**.[1]

Torres Strait

Cape York

Lower Gulf

76% of families with young children in very remote communities in Cape York (and Central Australia) have reported experiencing **food insecurity.**[7]

In Cape York, a **healthy food basket costs 50% more** than it does in Brisbane.[8]

85% of the Far North Queensland population (excluding Lower Gulf) is in the **lowest socioeconomic quintile.**[4]

Communities in remote Far North and Central Queensland regions are **20% more likely to experience food insecurity** compared to inner Brisbane.[2]

Healthy food in very remote Torres Strait Island communities **costs 35% of the median household income.**[9]

Food security is identified as a community priority in the North West and Torres and Cape Hospital and Health Services Making Tracks Together health equity strategies.

Planting the seed for change

The Plan will build on the work of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations, local, state and federal government agencies and key industry and not-for-profit stakeholders. Each focus area will include investigation, design and consultation phases to ensure action is relevant, effective, feasible and community driven.

Through shared leadership, it is intended that the Plan will cultivate whole-of-system change by:

- **Establishing the conditions for success** such as, partnerships, governance, information sharing and on-going learning, to better understand food security in remote Far North Queensland and Lower Gulf communities, including opportunities, challenges and benefits.

- **Nurturing current and emerging opportunities** across regions, guided by community voice, historical learnings, Traditional knowledges and contemporary evidence.

- **Enabling collaboration at the national level** in partnership with the National Indigenous Australians Agency. This will include supporting the development of a National Remote First Nations Food Security Strategy and seeking opportunities to work across states in a combined effort to develop northern Australia.

Action Plan 1

Plant, 2023 to 2026
Establish fertile ground

Cultivate collective leadership and vision to enable system change.

Action Plan 2

Nurture, 2026 to 2029
Support budding change

Test, trial and evaluate place-based solutions to support change.

Action Plan 3

Grow, 2029 to 2032
Embed and sustain growth

Sustain growth by upscaling and embedding effective solutions.

Enabling food secure systems in remote Queensland

Food insecurity is a whole-of-system issue which requires shared understanding, investment, and leadership across all sectors

Burringilly Aboriginal Corporation staff preparing community meals.
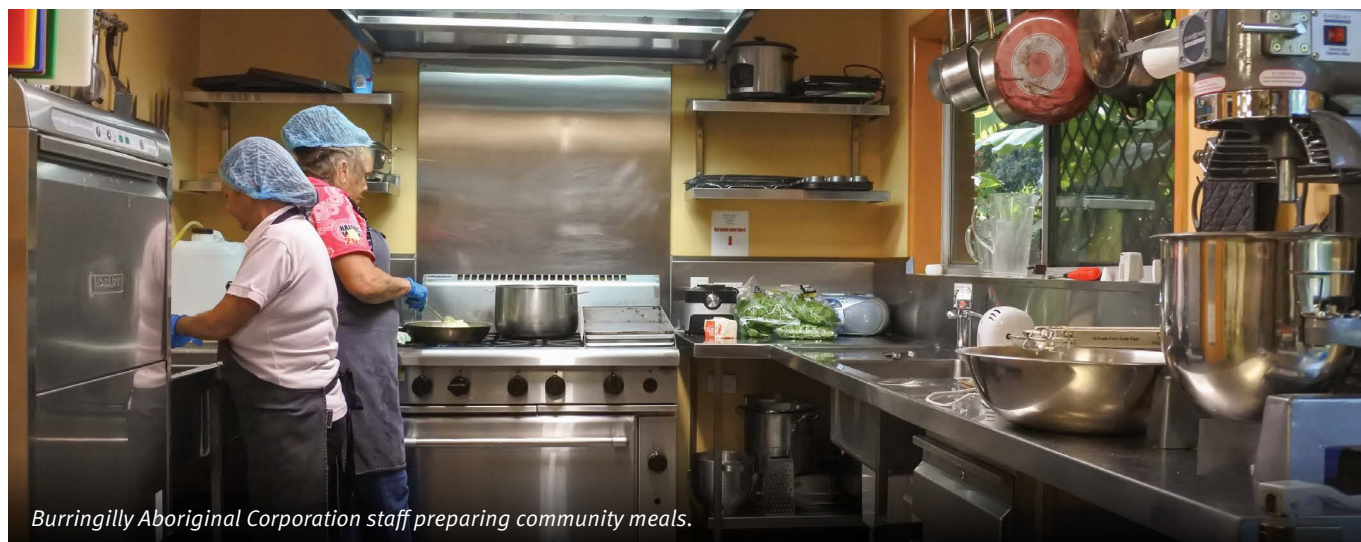
Food insecurity in remote communities is a long-standing challenge, driven by the impacts of colonisation, trauma and stifled economic development. Recently, food insecurity has been worsened by natural disasters, the COVID-19 pandemic and global instability. Despite strong advocacy and dedicated community leadership over many years, shifting the dial on chronic food insecurity remains a whole-of-system issue that requires strong leadership across sectors.

To advance food security, the right foundations need to be in place to deliver relevant, feasible and sustainable solutions. The Plan will ensure these foundations are in place by supporting 4 key enablers:

Collective leadership: Working together across government, community, industry and other sectors to support shared design, implementation and ownership of solutions, together.

Knowledge translation: Recognising the importance of technical expertise and cultural knowledge to ensure that decision-making, investment and action is evidence-based and informed by the community.

Solution-driven investment: Funding models and investment enable effective implementation and evaluation and ensure the right mechanisms are in place to support food security into the future.

Strengths-based approaches: Identifying, highlighting and celebrating the strengths, resilience and leadership within communities and sectors. Using these to develop solutions and overcome challenges.

Action	Lead agency	Supporting agencies
E.1 Identify critical relevant data sets to enable informed decision-making and investment in food security	**HWQld**	DTATSIPCA, DAF, DTMR, DoH, DSDILGP, QH, DRDMW
E.2 Strengthen and drive policies and networks that address food security barriers in remote community settings across sectors, including at the national level.	**HWQld**	DPC, NIAA, DoE, DTMR, DSDILGP, QH, DTIS, TSRA, DES, DRDMW
E.3 Drive innovation and collective action through partnership with community, government, industry, the not-for-profit sector, universities and research institutes	**HWQld**	
E.4 Develop a Measuring Change Framework to support monitoring, evaluation and learning in implementing Gather + Grow 2023—2032, including defining measures of success which align with community aspirations and state and national indicators where possible.	**HWQld**	DTATSIPCA, NIAA, TSRA
E.5 Embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander paradigms and data sovereignty across food security priorities, with an initial focus on research and evaluation.	**HWQld**	DTATSIPCA
E.6 Support the remote workforce to deliver Gather + Grow 2023—2032 and contribute to the evidence base.	**HWQld**	QH, DTMR, DAF, TAFE Qld, DoE, DTATSIPCA, DYJESBT
E.7 Conduct an assessment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander small business in Far North Queensland to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander small business development and improved outcomes.	**DYJESBT**	

> *There are significant investments needed in a wide range of areas to realise the transformational change that will be required to support (the) Generation Next to live healthy and sustainable lives in remote communities in North Queensland.'*
>
> Industry Stakeholder
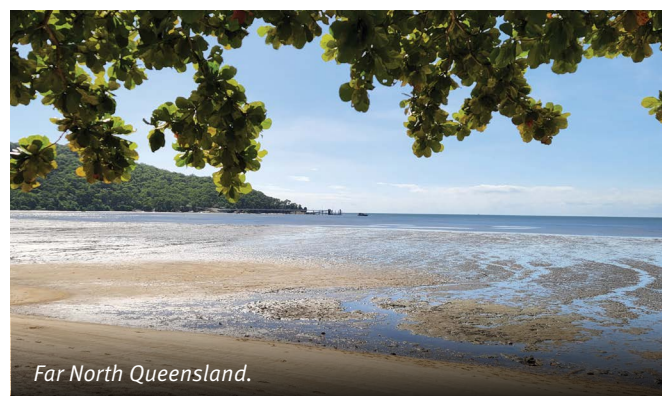
Far North Queensland.

Optimising supply chains and logistics to ensure quality, affordable, healthy food is consistently available year-round

Supply chains to remote Queensland communities are long, complex and often disrupted. The cost of transport, lack of bulk purchasing power and high operating costs contribute to expensive remote supply chains. As a result, residents of very remote Far North Queensland and Lower Gulf communities pay up to 31% more for everyday items.[4] This has a profound impact on the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who live there.

Remote supply chains operate in complex regulatory and legislative environments and a challenging climate.[10] Supply chain participants must balance competing priorities related to quality, delivery, inventory, cost, customer satisfaction and safety.[11] A better understanding of these competing priorities is required to enable whole-of-system change that genuinely benefits communities.

The Plan will focus on creating a shared understanding of, and vision for, Queensland's remote supply chains. This includes collecting and coordinating information that will help to design and prioritise solutions. To achieve this, the next 3 years will focus on building collective leadership across all sectors, including with stakeholders such as industry freight providers, retailers, consumers and other supply chain participants. Solutions such as remote freight subsidies, distribution hubs and road infrastructure will also be explored.
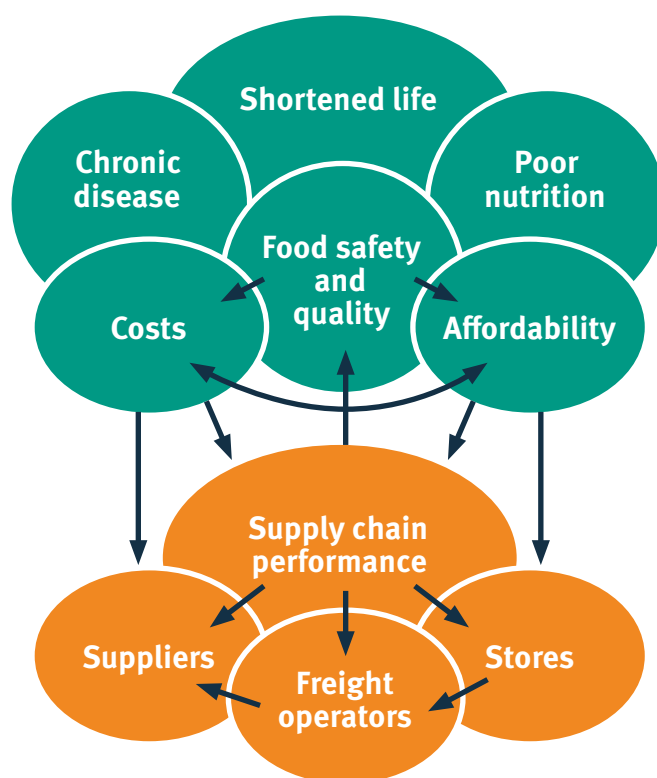
Supply chain performance is related to food safety, quality and health outcomes[11]

Action		Lead agency	Supporting agencies
1.1	Conduct and support investigations of remote food supply chains to understand their challenges, opportunities and influencing factors, including, the identification of strategies to improve resilience. For example, supply chain and service provider mapping, and shipment monitoring using temperature and location sensors.	**DAF**	DTMR, HWQld, DSDILGP, TCICA, DES
1.2	Co-design evidence-based supply chain solutions with communities, government, service providers, industry and universities to enable improved healthy food accessibility (including cost) and availability. For example, providing recommendations for subsidies and infrastructure.	**HWQld, DAF**	TCICA, DES, DTMR, DSDILGP
1.3	Foster continued collaboration between relevant stakeholders involved with remote supply chains.	**DTMR**	HWQld, DES
1.4	Investigate opportunities to pool procurement across government and community settings to reduce the freight cost of food.	**QH**	HWQld, DOE, QH, QGP (DEPW), DTATSIPCA

Case study

Building the evidence base for remote supply chains in Queensland

Freight costs are a major contributor to the high cost of living in remote communities in Far North Queensland and the Lower Gulf.

Through stakeholder and community engagement, the need for better data highlighting freight challenges in remote Queensland was identified. It was recognised that a strong evidence-base would be required to improve living conditions and food security in remote communities. As a result, Health and Wellbeing Queensland and Torres Cape Indigenous Council Alliance have undertaken 2 studies to build the evidence base for remote supply chains in Queensland.

With support from Torres Cape Indigenous Council Alliance, Health and Wellbeing Queensland has mapped the paddock to store journey of 13 healthy foods to 2 remote Queensland communities. The products mapped were identified by communities as low quality, high in price and/or not available. Bamaga and Mornington Island were the focus of this study due to their remoteness and associated supply chain challenges. Results confirm there are key differences between remote and urban/regional supply chains. These differences create significant food security challenges in remote Queensland as they cover long distances, take a long time to navigate, include a lot of handling, are prone to disruption and are carbon intensive.

Torres Cape Indigenous Council Alliance commissioned a Freight Equalisation Study to demonstrate the difference in freight costs between remote and urban Queensland communities and to propose strategies that could reduce the financial burden in remote communities.

The Freight Equalisation Study involved extensive data collection, stakeholder consultations, and expert analysis to understand and highlight freight challenges in remote Queensland. The findings indicate that the economic conditions for remote supply chains are more difficult compared to in urban areas. These studies are intended to inform decision-makers when seeking effective solutions.

Information and evidence generated through these 2 studies will inform solution design with government, community and industry leaders during implementation of this Plan.

> ❝ 'Within any community, obesity and chronic disease is an important issue, particularly in remote communities where access to health resources can be limited. The idea is to help people on the front foot and give them options to help them avoid those diseases and those health issues, through good healthy eating and the selections that we offer here, the quality of the food and the cost of the food. So it's all about making sure that we can bring food to the community in an affordable and sustainable manner.'

Industry Stakeholder

Key priority 2:
Local food production

Improving access and availability of healthy food by creating supportive settings for sustainable local food production

Local food production has been identified by communities as a solution to improve local resilience, ease supply chain pressures and drive economic growth.[12,13] Agriculture plays a key role in the economy of Far North Queensland and Lower Gulf regions.[14] Pockets of activity currently contribute positively to health, employment, food supply, culture, and social connectedness.[9]

There is potential to expand local food production across the region by leveraging existing infrastructure and community strengths, creating the right partnerships, and highlighting cultural knowledge.[9] However, several barriers impact the long-term impact of local food production across Far North Queensland and Lower Gulf.[9,15] To enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

to meet community goals for localised food systems, shared leadership and wrap-around support is needed. For example, partnership with local services such as local stores will strengthen community involvement and reduce competition. Similarly, agriculture industry and agribusiness partners will be required to share innovation, support business skills in remote regions and drive regional economic development.

Prior to colonisation and settlement, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples enjoyed a varied and nutrient dense diet using traditional food harvesting and hunting, preparation and sharing practices. Food continues to play an essential role in teaching and knowledge sharing in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. It is essential that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can continue to access traditional foods on both Land and Sea Country.

The Plan will focus on setting up remote Far North Queensland and Lower Gulf communities and businesses for successful local food production by supporting communities with the right networks, information, partnerships, and planning. Understanding the physical, social, and contextual environments for remote local food production, will enable development of tools which aid decision-making and participation.

Action		Lead agency	Supporting agencies
2.1	Review remote local food production challenges, successes and opportunities to inform the implementation of a principle-based investment framework for decision-making and regional coordination of food production and distribution	**DAF, HWQld**	DES
2.2	Identify and secure technical advice (where possible) to determine the critical inputs and infrastructure required for place-based food production through partnership between communities, government, industry and universities	**DAF, HWQld**	DTATSIPCA
2.3	Coordinate communities, government, industry and the not-for-profit sector to pilot place-based healthy food production solutions that are community and data driven, and cost-effective over the long term.	**DAF, HWQld**	DTATSIPCA, DES
2.4	Investigate current practices, barriers, and enablers related to traditional food access and utilisation, including land regeneration, cultural knowledge and the ongoing impact of colonisation.	**DTATSIPCA**	HWQld, DAF, DTIS

Case study

Mornington Island market garden feasibility study

Healthy food supply chains to Mornington Island in Queensland's Lower Gulf are up to 2,815 kms long and involve up to 20 touch points. As a result, fresh food sold on Mornington Island is, on average, 34% more expensive compared with Brisbane, is often unavailable and is of low quality.

To establish a local fresh food supply and reduce reliance on long and complex supply chains, the Mornington Island community is aiming to establish a commercial market garden. In support, Mornington Shire Council, Health and Wellbeing Queensland and Arup Australia partnered to deliver a Mornington Island Market Garden Feasibility Study, funded through the Arup Global Challenge Community Engagement Project.

The purpose of the study is to outline the critical considerations for establishing a successful, sustainable, local market garden. Based on community consultation, data and evidence, the study will enable Mornington Island to progress towards their goal of a self-determined, resilient food system.

Source: Farmacist

'We're really privileged that specialist partners have developed a feasibility study. The study's findings will ensure that we set off on the right foot and that we develop a customised implementation plan that will be genuinely successful.'

Mayor Kyle Yanner, Mornington Shire Council

'Our community needs to become more sustainable – environmentally, socially and economically. A market garden will assist our people – young and old – to develop important lifelong skills, growing and maintaining a range of green, healthy crops, all year round. A garden will bring people together. It'll also help by enabling us to supply produce directly to our local store, reducing food miles, whilst ensuring freshness and quality. We won't have to rely on mainland supply chains so much and can work towards becoming independent.'

Mayor Kyle Yanner, Mornington Shire Council

Key priority 3:
Healthy communities

Empowering communities to choose and prepare healthy food by building awareness, capability and commitment around good nutrition

Healthy eating is a core pillar and outcome of food security. Enabling healthy eating through policy, education, awareness-raising and healthy environments initiatives will drive demand for healthy food in remote locations. Ultimately, this contributes to improved nutrition and diet-related health outcomes.


Health and Wellbeing Queensland working with CEQ store staff.

Remote stores are an important setting to influence community food supply and purchasing behaviours. Many remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Far North Queensland and Lower Gulf are serviced by one grocery or general store which provides the main source of food.

Other potential food sources include bush food and community gardens. Schools and early childhood education and care centres are also places of community and family gathering that can impact on childhood and whole-of-family nutrition.

Achieving consistent health messaging and policy across community settings requires collaboration. This means building and strengthening partnerships with Queensland's major store groups, independent stores, education and care services and industry groups (including wholesalers). The Plan will develop and trial evidence-based policies and practices and establish the right infrastructure, equipment and tools to support healthier food environments.

This work will be supported through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled health sector and aid health promotion across community settings. Health and Wellbeing Queensland will identify and learn from previous projects to improve the way the Queensland Government works with remote Far North Queensland and Lower Gulf communities.

Legend:
- Independent/Community
- ALPA – Island & Cape stores
- Community Enterprise Queensland stores
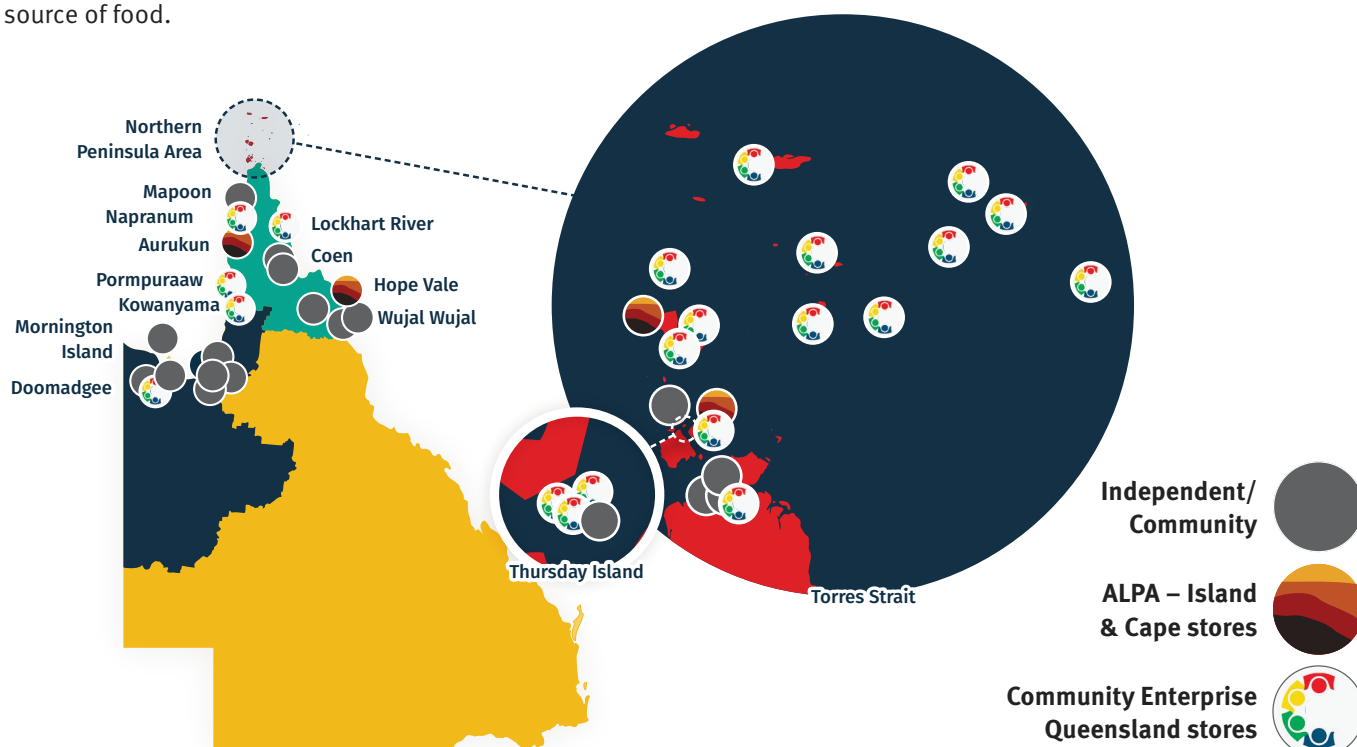
Accurate to the best of our knowledge as of December 2022. The location of some independent stores have not been validated.

Action		Lead agency	Supporting agencies
3.1	Drive evidence-based and community-led food security and health promotion action through partnership with communities, government, industry, and universities.	**HWQld**	DTATSIPCA, DTIS
3.2	Enhance the capability of remote stores to achieve healthy retail environments related to food and drink products and their price, placement, and promotion	**HWQld**	CEQ
3.3	Deliver and expand programs that increase the demand for and use of healthy food and improve basic knowledge of food systems and food system careers in remote Queensland, for example, HWQld's Pick of the Crop program.	**HWQld**	DAF, DTIS, DoE
3.4	Map remote community food systems to understand the distribution of, and opportunity to achieve, good nutrition in communities.	**HWQld, DTATSIPCA**	DoE, DAF, DTIS

Case study

Gather + Grow Healthy Stores

Through the Gather + Grow Healthy Stores project, Community Enterprise Queensland and Health and Wellbeing Queensland have partnered to promote healthy purchasing in remote stores. The project involves working with remote stores across Far North Queensland and Lower Gulf to assess and improve the healthiness of retail environments using evidence-based tools.

The project is working with Community Enterprise Queensland Islanders Board of Industry and Service (IBIS) and Aboriginal Business, Industry and Service (ABIS) stores to understand how food and drink products, their placement, and promotional retail practices can be altered to direct shoppers towards healthier choices. Underpinning the project, is a research partnership with The University of Queensland, Monash University and the Menzies School of Health Research.

To encourage workforces to initiate similar work across remote Australia, Health and Wellbeing Queensland partnered with Monash University to deliver an online Project ECHO® learning series. The series provides participants with the skills, tools and knowledge to work effectively with the remote retail environments.

Key priority 4:
Healthy homes

Enabling communities to prepare, cook and store healthy food in homes with reliable and working equipment and facilities

Healthy homes play an important role in food security and healthy eating. To date, the Queensland Government has directed significant resources to preventing illness in remote homes. For example, preventing rheumatic heart disease, which is 15 times higher in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders compared with non-Indigenous Queenslanders.[4] There is opportunity to build on these existing initiatives, to improve food security in Far North Queensland and Lower Gulf communities.

The Plan will support shared leadership by bringing together key stakeholders to understand priorities, roles and responsibilities. It will also strengthen how data and information is shared to ensure future action plans deliver solutions that are relevant, feasible and benefit communities on-going.

Action		Lead agency	Supporting agencies
4.1	Use the learnings from the Healthy Housing Pilot Program to understand the factors influencing healthy food utilisation to inform future development of food security action and service systems integration.	**DoH, QH**	HWQld
4.2	Collect data about the availability and accessibility (including cost) of healthy home products in a sample of remote stores to establish a baseline measure.	**QH**	HWQld
4.3	Work with a sample of remote community stores to promote healthy home products that prevent chronic illness through the in-store environment.	**QH, HWQld**	CEQ
4.4	Investigate opportunities to support home-gardening by partnering with communities to understand capacity, capability, sustainability and potential funding models.	**HWQld**	DoH, DES, TSRA

Case study
The Healthy Housing Program

The Healthy Housing Pilot Program is a joint initiative between Queensland Health (QH) and the Department of Housing (DoH), in collaboration with the Department of Energy and Public Works (DEPW). In response to the increase of acute rheumatic heart disease in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, the Program aims to reduce communicable health conditions related to poor housing conditions. The Program will support healthier home environments and reduce the risk of infectious disease in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, through focused health promotion and advice on healthy living practices connected to timely housing repairs and maintenance.

The program identified the pilot locations through early assessments which indicated that Yarrabah and Badu Island are well-positioned as pilot locations due to community structures, the capacity of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) and availability of local trades.

The Program works in collaboration with primary healthcare service providers in Yarrabah and Badu Island to support prevention and clinical health services. Advice and practical support to enable families to practice healthy living in the home is provided by QH Environmental Health Workers in partnership with Health Workers from ACCHOs. This is supported by housing maintenance and upgrade activity with a focus on improved functionality of health hardware (e.g. fridges, cooktops, power and water).

Next steps

Working together to improve food security in Far North Queensland and Lower Gulf

Gather + Grow 2023—2032 and the Gather + Grow Action Plan 2023—2026 aim to improve food security and health and wellbeing outcomes in Queensland's remote communities. Such change will require shared leadership and resources across all levels of government and partnership with communities, not-for-profit organisations, industry and others.

The Queensland Government is committed to working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to ensure actions are responsive to local needs. The Plan is a starting point for working together on shared priorities and continued partnership with communities in developing, implementing, evaluating, and adapting solutions.

Implementation of the Plan will be supported by strong governance across sectors and with communities. The Gather + Grow Steering Committee will enable the delivery of the plan through shared accountability, decision-making and coordination across all 3 tiers of government, working together in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community leaders. Where possible, Health and Wellbeing Queensland will also engage with existing community driven processes and forums for shared decision-making, such as, local government and Local Thriving Communities Local Decision Making Bodies.

Measuring the success of, and reporting on, the implementation of the Plan will help the Queensland Government to monitor progress towards goals and ensure that solutions are effective and sustainable. A framework for monitoring, learning and evaluation will be developed to inform how change and impact will be measured across communities and over time. Health and Wellbeing Queensland will incorporate learnings to shape future action plans.

Acronyms

ACCHOs	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Community Controlled Health Organisations
CEQ	Community Enterprise Queensland
DAF	Department of Agriculture and Fisheries
DEPW	Department of Energy and Public Works
DES	Department of Environment and Science
DoE	Department of Education
DoH	Department of Housing
DPC	Department of Premier and Cabinet
DRDMW	Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water
DSDILGP	Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning
DTATSIPCA	Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts
DTIS	Department of Tourism, Innovation and Sport
DTMR	Department of Transport and Main Roads
DYJESBT	Department of Youth Justice, Employment, Small Business and Training
HWQld	Health and Wellbeing Queensland
LTC	Local Thriving Communities
NIAA	National Indigenous Australians Agency
QH	Queensland Health
TCHHS	Torres and Cape Hospital and Health Service
TCICA	Torres and Cape Indigenous Council Alliance
TSRA	Torres Strait Regional Authority

Terms and definitions

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander discrete community is a term that refers to a discrete community in a geographic location, bound by physical or other boundaries, and inhabited or intended to be inhabited by predominantly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, with housing or infrastructure that is either owned or managed on a community basis. Discrete communities include:

- communities in urban areas where the title to a parcel of land has been transferred to an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander organisation

- well-established communities and outstations in remote areas

- Deed of Grant in Trust communities and their outstations in Queensland as well as the 2 shires of Aurukun and Mornington Island

- communities on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pastoral properties/leases.[16]

Accessibility is one dimension of food security. It relates to having physical access to food (ability to walk or drive to food, having a food store nearby that is stocked) and having the money to buy food. An adequate supply of food does not guarantee food security. *Economic accessibility* includes the cost of living and refers to the income available for families to buy healthy food. The cost of food and other essential expenses (for example, housing, electricity, medications) and income all impact economic access. *Physical accessibility* describes the ability for individuals to physically access food, including transport modes, infrastructure and costs as well as physical ability and/or supports required.

Availability is one dimension of food security. It refers to the supply of food and includes how much food is available to communities, and whom in the community it is available to. It is determined by the level of food production, stock levels, trade and other factors.[3] Food availability is when there is enough food in communities to feed its members a healthy diet that meets cultural preferences and is of acceptable quality.

Agriculture includes all forms of food production and all related activities, such as, workforce, water irrigation and drainage work, equipment, production, transport, processing, packaging, storage and the sale of agricultural products. Agriculture includes a wide variety of food production methods (for example, broadacre cropping, permaculture, regenerative agriculture, protected cropping, traditional and emerging techniques).

Community-controlled sector refers to services initiated and operated by local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders communities to deliver holistic, comprehensive and culturally appropriate services to community which control it, through a locally elected board of management.[17]

Food security refers to having reliable access to a range of affordable food, drink and essential groceries that are safe and meet the nutritional and cultural needs of individuals, families and communities. Food security occurs when all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their cultural preferences and dietary needs for an active and healthy life.[3]

Food security dimensions refer to the 6 dimensions of food security, which are; accessibility, availability, use, stability, agency and sustainability. Please refer to the diagram on page 7 of Gather + Grow 2023—2032 (the Strategy).

Food systems include the entire range of people, places, processes and businesses involved in the production, processing, packaging, distribution, preparation and consumption of food, and the waste produced throughout these processes. Food systems underpin environmental sustainability, economic development, health and wellbeing. Food systems link closely with other systems such as health, trade, cultural, environmental and energy systems. A sustainable food system is environmentally, economically, culturally and socially resilient.[18]

Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through self-determined ecologically sound and sustainable methods and their right to define their own food and agricultural systems.[13]

Health hardware is the facilities and equipment needed to safely prepare, eat and store healthy food at home. It includes facilities such as fridges, cooktops, utensils, running water and power, cleaning supplies and kitchen space.[19]

Health inequities describe the differences in health between groups defined on the basis of socioeconomic conditions and the material, social, political, and cultural conditions that shape peoples' lives and healthy behaviours.

Healthy food includes food and drinks that support a health behaviours as per the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australian Guide to Healthy Eating.[20]

Healthy home products are products needed for people to undertake healthy behaviours at home, such as cooking and washing. Examples of healthy home products include cooking equipment and utensils, towels, soap, washing machines and first aid.

Health-enabling home is a home that meets adequate standards of living to prevent disease. A health-enabling home has sufficient sanitation, hygiene and health hardware, including running water, continuous and affordable power supply, access to maintenance technicians and tradespeople when required and the ability to initiate this as needed.

Industry refers to service providers, consultancy firms, industry advocacy bodies and other industry-based organisations that have expertise in, or influence over, matters related to the key priority areas.

Lead responsible agency is a term that refers to the government agency or department(s) best-placed to lead delivery of actions due to their staff expertise, program of work and/or responsibilities to Queensland.

Local Decision Making Body is a term that refers to a body established by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities as they determine how the Local Thriving Communities reform can best work for them, including the membership, model and local name for the local group. Local Decision Making Bodies engage directly with government to share decision-making about the design, delivery and effectiveness of the Queensland Government funded services in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.[21]

Local food production refers to the process of producing food within a short distance from where it is consumed. Local food production also refers to the community structures and supply chains that enable food produced (for example at a community garden) to be accessed by community members. Often, this is different from a large-scale supermarket system. The term includes various types of local food production such as small-scale community gardens, market gardens and other forms of food production such as native foods and cattle grazing. Local food production also includes all types of food production, for example, fishing, agriculture, aquaculture and farming.

Local food systems is a term that emphasises reduced supply chain distances, and localised food production. The term acknowledges that the 'localisation' of food systems can mean different things, to different communities. A local food system might, for example, include no local food production but shorter supply chain distances, while another local food system might include both.

Local Thriving Communities is a long-term reform to achieve a visibly different way of government working with communities. Local Thriving Communities requires government and communities to work together to move

decision-making closer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, embrace self-determination, and engage in relationships so that service design and delivery better meet the needs of each community.[22]

National Community Stores Licensing Scheme is a commonwealth scheme that applies to stores supplying groceries and drink to remote Aboriginal communities where those stores are an important source of food, drink, or grocery items. To meet acceptable standards for community stores, the scheme assesses the range, quantity and quality of foods, food storage, preparation of healthy takeaway meals, governance and financial integrity of operations. The scheme currently only applies in the Northern Territory and was introduced as part of the Northern Territory Intervention.[23,24]

Stability is one dimension of food security. It refers to food security being constant and reliable over time. Stability exists when there is no risk of loss of food supply from economic, political or environmental factors. Even if an individual's food access, availability and use is adequate at one point in time, they would still be considered to be experiencing food insecurity if any of these three things are at risk of weakening, for example, due to adverse weather conditions, political instability, domestic/family violence, housing insecurity or economic factors (unemployment, rising food prices).[3]

Supply chain is a network of individuals, organisations, resources, activities and technology involved in creation and sale of a product.[25]

Supporting responsible agency is a term that refers to the agency that will support the lead responsible agency in the delivery of the action. They may have a role in driving separate functions within an action through workforce expertise and/or programs of work.

Sustainability, in the content of this strategy, refers to programs, initiatives and partnerships continuing for as long as is required to deliver food security outcomes for communities in the long-term (unless referring to 'environmental sustainability'). Sustainability occurs when outcomes are not short-lived or dependent on factors that may change and affect community benefits.

Remote relates to the Australian Statistical Geographic Standard, which determines 5 levels of remoteness based on relative access to services. Under this structure, remote is defined as Remote and Very Remote Areas.[26]

Use is a dimension of food security referring to the ability of individuals and families to benefit from the nutrition of healthy food, once made available and accessible. It encompasses the physical access to all resources required to prepare, cook and store healthy food, as well as the knowledge, empowerment and physical skills to achieve a healthy diet.

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