

Remote Queensland Healthy Food Supply Chain Study

What can be done

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Remote supply chains operate in complex regulatory and legislative environments. It is time to think differently about how Queensland approaches remote supply chains and support a co-ordinated whole-of-system approach to achieve real food security gains, such as food being more available, affordable and of better quality, year round. A multi-strategic response addressing several priorities is required.

To improve remote healthy food accessibility and availability stakeholders across community, government, service providers, industry and universities should come together to design evidence based supply chain solutions.



Infrastructure

- The impact of supply chain disruption on remote communities should be considered when planning regional and remote infrastructure in Queensland. The ability to develop resilient pathways for freight, or redundancy in the event of disruption, can prevent empty shelves and avoid costly workarounds during weather events and the wet season.
- Where possible, the maintenance of critical food supply chain infrastructure in remote communities should be prioritised. This includes road infrastructure, ports, wharves and sea freight routes. Expert support and resources will improve food availability and system resilience.
- Remote communities should be supported with adequate in-community storage facilities, such as cold storage, to allow stockpiling during the wet season and to prevent food shortages when disruptions occur.
- In March 2023, the Queensland Government announced a Remote Freight Funding Package of \$64.5 million, including \$6.5 million for a regional and remote infrastructure fund.



Market support

- While a commercially competitive market in remote communities is ultimately desired, this is not currently possible for all communities due to their sheer geographic isolation.
- Under the Queensland Government Remote Freight Funding Package, \$52.5 million is allocated for a remote subsidy in Far North Queensland. The design of the scheme should ensure that remote community members ultimately benefit from tangibly lower prices of goods and services and more regular supply of fresh fruits and vegetables.
- There are opportunities to support regional enterprises that participate in the supply chain, including food producers, distributors, freight companies and retailers, to develop better service offerings, shorten supply chains, clear bottlenecks and reduce costs.



Co-ordination

- The majority of freight to remote communities is driven by government services. For example, goods required by the Department of Education and Queensland Health. Currently, the opportunity to co-ordinate this freight with food to reduce costs is limited. Exploring co-ordinated procurement across remote stores and other food-related settings with government departments has the potential to significantly reduce the cost of healthy food supply chains.
- Under the Queensland Government Remote Freight Funding Package, \$5.2 million is allocated to freight co-ordination in Far North Queensland.

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Industry stakeholders throughout the supply chain face significant challenges in mitigating the risks and issues associated with long, complex remote supply chains. This results in lower quality, more expensive food, impacting food security. Through partnership and collaboration, there is opportunity for industry stakeholders to analyse their operations and provide improved service to remote communities that align with corporate responsibility obligations.



Suppliers and distributors

- Where possible bring supply chains closer to remote communities by developing regional operations such as food production, supporting industries and logistics.
- Improve the reliability of food supply and reduce the number of missed shipments, by working with businesses across the supply chain.
- Explore options to maximise resilience of product packaging and improve cold chain performance.
- Understand feasibility of supplying 'better dated' food to remote communities, so that the freshest food is prioritised for communities with the longest supply chain.



Freight operators

- Explore possibilities to increase the frequency of delivery to distribution facilities and retail stores to improve resilience.
- Coordinate with suppliers, distributors and other freight operators to find opportunities that optimise logistics and reduce handling, particularly related to cold chain products.



Retailers

- Continue to work collaboratively with suppliers, distributors and freight organisations to provide information, foster coordination and drive improvement.
- Continue to act as a conduit for community preferences and feedback. Elevate the community voice to allow the supply chain and market to innovate and meet the demands of service requirements.
- Continue to improve practices relating to asset management, pricing, governance, financial management and group buying.
- Prioritise, where appropriate and available, local suppliers that support shorter, more resilient supply chains.

What are the next steps?

The findings of this study must be considered in the context of other contemporary evidence emerging in Queensland.

Solutions co-designed with community is needed to ensure positive and lasting change. Stakeholders will need to be brought together to understand the collective evidence, implement solutions and drive change and accountability. This will be facilitated through strong governance mechanisms established by Queensland Government agencies (and partners) through delivery of **Gather + Grow** – Queensland's draft plan to improve food security in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.