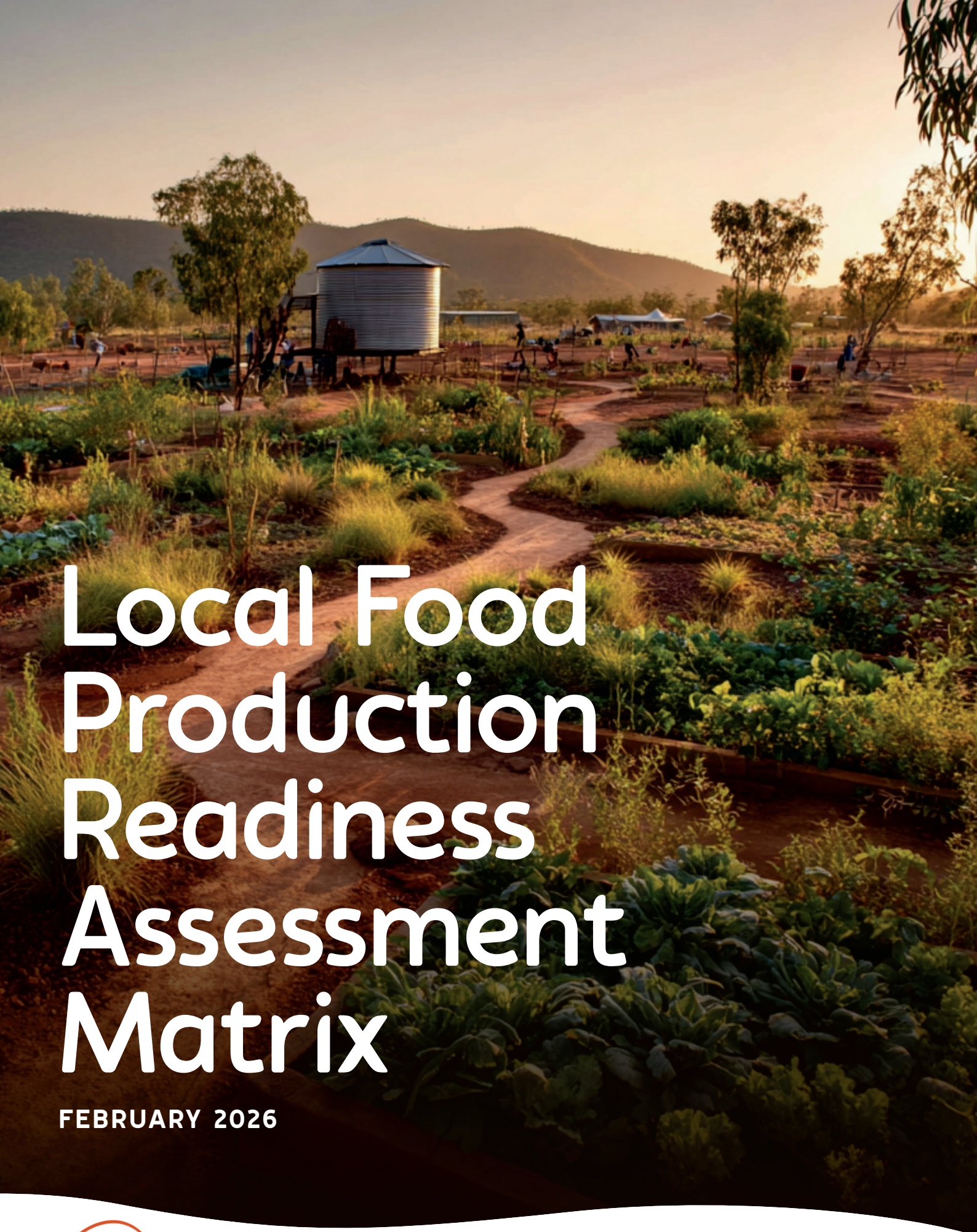

Local Food Production Readiness Assessment Matrix

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pirrwara GLOBAL

health wellbeing Queensland

Queensland Government

Acknowledgement

This Matrix is intended to be used in partnership with Traditional Owners and community members, recognising Cultural Authority, connection to Country, and the right of communities to guide decisions affecting their food systems.

Its application must be grounded in Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC).

Cover image: AI generated concept image of a proposed food enterprise, balancing community expectations with what is achievable in a remote Queensland First Nations community.

Purpose of the matrix

The Local Food Production Readiness Assessment Matrix is a practical tool to help communities and partners decide whether a proposed food initiative is:

- appropriate
- feasible
- supported
- ready to proceed

It exists because many food initiatives fail not from lack of funding or effort, but because readiness was not properly assessed.

This matrix helps answer:

Are we ready to do this here, in this way, at this time?

When to use this matrix

Use the matrix when:

- A new food project is proposed
- Funding is being considered
- A community wants to explore local production
- Multiple ideas need prioritising
- An existing initiative is being reviewed
- Planning discussions need structure
- It is not a funding application or technical study
- It is an early-stage readiness conversation

How to use the matrix

Step 1
Describe the initiative

- What is being proposed?
- Who raised the idea?
- What need does it respond to?

Step 2
Bring the right people together

Include:

- Cultural Authority
- Community members
- Local workers or champions
- Relevant organisations (if needed)

Step 3
Work through each domain

Discuss the guiding questions and agree on a score.

Step 4
Record why you chose that score

The explanation matters more than the number.

Step 5
Identify next steps

The matrix helps determine whether to:

- Strengthen foundations
- Pilot the idea
- Move to implementation planning

All information can be entered into the

Local Food Production Readiness Assessment Matrix workbook

Readiness scale

Score	Description	Meaning in practice
1	**Emerging**	Idea exists but groundwork not yet in place
2	**Developing**	Some support, significant gaps remain
3	**Growing**	Strong potential, needs preparation
4	**Ready**	Conditions largely in place
5	**Established**	Fits well within community systems

Ethical use of the matrix

This Matrix must:

- Support community-led decision-making
- Respect Cultural Authority
- Be applied transparently
- Keep outcomes owned by the community

It is a guide, not a directive.

Assessment Domains

1. Community readiness and participation
2. Practical feasibility
3. Cultural alignment and authority
4. Governance and responsibility
5. Food security, health and nutrition
6. Economic participation and skills
7. Environmental fit and sustainability

1 Community readiness and participation

Key question

Do people want this, and can they participate?

Discuss

- Is there clear local interest?
- Are community members able to participate?
- Are there local champions?
- Does this fit community priorities?

Look for

- Community conversations or meetings
- Visible support
- Willing participants

Focus

Readiness, cohesion, leadership, and whole-of-community engagement.

Indicators

- Active local champions and clear leadership.
- Shared interest in food production or food sovereignty.
- Whole-of-community engagement across diverse residents (multi-Nation, renters, block-holders, new residents).
- Ability to establish cohort-based working groups: householder gardeners, block-holders, council growers, native title holders, youth groups, women's groups.
- Inclusive participation of women, youth and Elders.
- History of community-driven initiatives.
- Understanding of cultural requirements, seasons and obligations.
- Awareness within the community of the links between food, nutrition and health, including interest in improving household food practices.

2 Practical feasibility

Key question

Can this realistically work here?

Discuss

- Is the site suitable?
- Are water, land and climate appropriate?
- Is infrastructure available?
- Can it be maintained locally?

Look for

- Identified location
- Practical logistics
- Realistic understanding of costs and effort

Focus

Technical, logistical and supply chain requirements.

Indicators

- Access to suitable land/sea, water, soil and growing environments.
- Infrastructure: sheds, water supply, power, fencing, irrigation, cold chain.
- Freight reliability, transport costs, access to markets and price equity.
- Workforce readiness, training pathways and skill gaps.
- Availability of funding, co-investment or in-kind support.
- Regulatory and licensing requirements (e.g., fisheries, water, land access, food safety).
- Climate suitability and physical constraints.
- Ability of local production to improve physical access to fresh food for households, schools or community programs.

3 Cultural alignment and authority

Key question

Is this culturally supported and appropriate?

Discuss

- Has Cultural Authority been involved?
- Does the idea respect Country and Lore?
- Has Free, Prior and Informed Consent been confirmed?

Look for

- Elders' guidance
- Cultural endorsement
- Alignment with community values

Focus

Cultural legitimacy, FPIC, identity and safety.

Indicators

- Confirmed Free, Informed, Prior Consent for land, sea and data use.
- Cultural sites, gendered protocols, and seasonal cycles integrated.
- Leadership by Cultural Authority groups (as defined locally).
- Integration of language, cultural stories and traditional knowledge.
- Coexistence of cultural authority structures with cohort-based working groups.
- Cultural safety for women, youth and vulnerable groups.

4 Governance and responsibility

Key question

Who will lead and sustain this?

Discuss

- Who is responsible for coordination?
- Are roles clear?
- How will decisions be made?
- Is there long-term ownership?

Look for

- Named leaders
- Clear structure
- Shared understanding of responsibilities

Focus

Governance strength, decision clarity, communication and accountability.

Indicators

- Clear governance body with cultural, technical and community representation.
- Whole-of-community stakeholder leadership incorporated in governance.
- Transparent communication and decision pathways.
- Cross-agency alignment (health, council, education, economic development).
- Partnership readiness and accountability arrangements.
- Data sovereignty agreements and cultural IP protections.
- Ability to manage finances, risk, reporting and operations.

5 Food security, health and nutrition

Key question

Will this improve access to healthy food?

Discuss

- Will households benefit directly?
- Will it improve affordability or availability?
- Will people actually use the food produced?

Look for

- Clear pathway to consumption
- Local demand
- Connection to wellbeing outcomes

Focus

Access to fresh food, affordability, nutrition and food security outcomes.

Indicators

- Increased access to fresh, healthy and culturally preferred foods.
- Reduced reliance on expensive, freighted foods and ultra-processed items.
- Contribution to improved household food availability and affordability.
- Alignment with local health priorities, including prevention and wellbeing initiatives.
- Connections to schools, early childhood services, clinics and community health programs.
- Support for improved dietary diversity and nutrition across different age groups.
- Community understanding of how food production supports long-term health outcomes.

6 Economic participation and skills

Key question

Does this build local capability?

Discuss

- Will it create jobs or training?
- Are women and young people able to participate?
- Does it support inclusion?

Look for

- Skills opportunities
- Employment pathways
- Shared benefits

Focus

Jobs, enterprise, training and local social benefits.

Indicators

- Local employment and enterprise opportunities.
- Training, skill development and youth pathways.
- “Developing people to develop communities” — building capacity, confidence and leadership.
- Local procurement and community value retention.
- Inclusion of women, youth, Elders and people with disability.
- Opportunities for households to participate in food production, food sharing or local supply initiatives that support food security and wellbeing.

7 Environmental fit and sustainability

Key question

Is this sustainable on Country?

Discuss

- Does it suit local environmental conditions?
- Will it care for soil, water and ecosystems?
- Can it operate long-term?

Look for

- Alignment with Caring for Country
- Climate suitability
- Sustainable practices

Focus

Climate adaptation, land/sea health, and regenerative practices.

Indicators

- Clear governance body with cultural, technical and community representation.
- Whole-of-community stakeholder leadership incorporated in governance.
- Transparent communication and decision pathways.
- Cross-agency alignment (health, council, education, economic development).
- Partnership readiness and accountability arrangements.
- Data sovereignty agreements and cultural IP protections.
- Ability to manage finances, risk, reporting and operations.

Recording the assessment

- Domain
- Score
- Why this score?
- What needs strengthening?

Complete this collaboratively using the

Local Food Production Readiness Assessment Matrix workbook

Interpreting the results

The matrix is not a pass or fail test.

Low readiness?

Build foundations first

Mixed results?

Pilot carefully

Strong readiness?

Move towards implementation

What happens next?

After completing the Matrix, communities may choose to:

- Strengthen capacity
- Test a pilot project
- Seek partnerships
- Develop detailed plans

The Local Food Production Readiness Assessment Matrix is a joint initiative of Health and Wellbeing Queensland and the Queensland Department of Primary Industries, delivered by Nirrwara Global.

A Project Steering Committee comprised of these entities and Traditional Owners from Far North Queensland First Nations communities guided the development of the Matrix.

For more information visit:
hw.qld.gov.au/gather-grow/local-food-production-readiness-assessment-matrix