



LOCAL, FRESH AND FAIR HELPING FARMERS SELL DIRECT

The Greens' plan for helping farmers and communities connect

More and more Australians want to “know their farmer” and buy food direct from local growers. Building local food supply chains will help our farmers get a fair price, create local jobs and connect communities to affordable healthy food.

With one of the most concentrated food retail sectors in the world dominated by the supermarket duopoly, the barriers to making it easy to buy local food in Australia are significant. It is time for Australia to rebuild local food systems.

The Greens will provide \$85 million in grants over four years from 1 July 2014 for infrastructure and initiatives that connect farmers and local communities, such as:

- Starting farmers markets, mobile markets and community food box schemes.
- Creating and supporting producer cooperatives.
- Fitting out local food hubs for packaging and value-adding local food, including for larger bulk supply.
- Creating and marketing a regional food brand.

Our grants scheme cares for farmers and for local communities, making fresh local food more available and providing a more diverse market for producers.

> BENEFITS FOR FARMERS AND LOCAL FOOD BUSINESSES

The ability to sell direct to the public through farmers markets and fresh food box schemes has a number of benefits for farmers. Short supply chains often mean greater financial returns as producers receive a larger share of the food dollar.

These types of local food systems give farmers viable alternatives to low margin, high volume supply contracts. They provide an entry point for sales for growers just starting out, and the opportunity to diversify crops and value-add for greater returns.

Supporting local food systems creates opportunities for farmers in a district to collaborate and create an authentic local brand that can attract premium prices. The King Island and Margaret River local brands are good existing examples.

Providing infrastructure such as regional food hubs gives farmers and other local businesses access to facilities where they can store, pack and process foods, for example via bottling, juicing or pickling. Small to medium farmers and new enterprises typically can't afford to install such infrastructure on their own properties without a guaranteed market.

Food hubs also give farmers the opportunity to collaborate and meet regional commercial demand for produce, typically from institutions such as aged care centres, education providers, hotels and restaurants.

> COMMUNITY BENEFITS

Being able to buy direct from local growers gives communities access to fresh produce at competitive prices and helps expand access to affordable healthy food.

Providing grants will allow groups such as local councils to identify “food deserts” – places where there is limited or no access for the community to fresh and healthy food. Funding could then be provided for infrastructure, such as creating mobile farmer's markets that can travel into neighbourhoods.

Local food systems empower people to make informed choices and have full confidence in where their food has come from. The rise in the number of farmers markets and community food box systems has demonstrated that Australians are actively seeking ways to buy and support local produce and their farmers.

Regional food systems also increase local spending and money circulating in the local economy and support local jobs.



> THE USA EXPERIENCE

In 2009 the Obama administration created the 'Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food' program, a targeted investment in rebuilding local and regional food systems.

The program responded to the demand from American communities and farmers for alternative paths to market and access to local food.

The 'Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food' program has been hailed as a success. It has funded food hubs, local markets and branding and innovative ways of connecting communities to local food. Funding local infrastructure to provide access to fresh local food has helped low income American communities gain better access to healthy food.

Evaluations of key initiatives funded through the program such as regional food hubs¹ has demonstrated the economic and social benefits of governments investing in local food systems.

> OTHER PARTIES

Labor and the Coalition governments have long neglected regional food systems. Under their watch Australia has developed the most concentrated supermarket retail sector in the world, and our food system as a result is highly centralised and increasingly reliant on importing cheap processed food.

There are significant barriers and little assistance for farmers wanting to sell direct to the public.

The old parties have failed to understand the economic and social opportunities that regional food systems deliver for local communities.

The Katter Party rails against cheap food imports and promotes protectionism, but has no practical policies for providing the necessary infrastructure and support to rebuild local and regional food systems.

¹ <http://blogs.usda.gov/2011/04/19/food-hubs-creating-opportunities-for-producers-across-the-nation/>