Building a Fairer Food System
Community Symposium

9 November 2016 | The End Room, Brisbane Square Library
Welcome

We are delighted to welcome you to this ‘Building a Fairer Food System Community Symposium’. Transforming Australia’s food system to ensure ecological sustainability and fairness is one of the most pressing challenges facing all of us today. It is an issue for governments, business, industry, academics, social movements and citizens, and requires joined-up thinking and action from the local to national, regional and global levels.

We believe that community food systems – and the civic food actors involved – are key drivers of transformation. There is ample evidence that the corporate, industrial food system is strongly related to food insecurity, under- and over-nutrition, social inequalities (gender, migration, conflict, poverty, poor labour conditions), climate change and degraded environments globally. But solutions toward a fair and sustainable food system are emerging. Recent years have seen the rise in the politics and practices of food justice, where organisations have formed to lobby, coordinate and collaborate and ‘fair food practitioners’ produce and distribute food that incorporates the values of healthy communities, economies and environments.

This symposium aims to:

• Provide a platform for dialogue, learning and sharing between community food actors, scholars and diverse ‘food citizens’
• Identify key messages emerging from the symposium and translate these into practical ‘next steps’

Speakers will evaluate current food system dynamics and explore the attributes of a fairer food system, drawing on theoretical, creative and actual examples. What might an up-scaled fair food system look like? What are the barriers and how do we overcome them? What forms of knowledge, networks, partnerships and resources do we need?

Thank you for joining us to connect, explore, envisage and celebrate the transition to a fair food system! – Carol and Kiah
Dr Carol Richards is a Senior Research Fellow at the QUT Business School. She holds a PhD in sociology, and specialises in sustainable food systems, food security and fossil fuel divestment/climate justice. She has researched the link between global finance capital and the ‘moral’ economy of land acquisition; supermarket power and food waste; and social movements that address climate change by challenging controversial industries such as coal, gas and oil. Carol led the Australasian Agrifood Research Network between 2010-2014 and currently serves on the Council of the International Rural Sociology Association. She served the fair food community as the Vice-President of the Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance and co-editor of the People’s Food Plan. Her research examines some of the most critical issues of our times, presenting a scholarly and empirically grounded critique of resource acquisition, distribution and its social and environmental impacts.

Dr Kiah Smith is a Research Fellow at the UQ School of Social Science and Global Change Institute. She holds a PhD in sociology, and specialises in food security, food/climate justice, gender and development. Broadly speaking, her work explores the interconnections between global environmental change, social inequality, justice, participation and contestation underpinning food system transformation. Key topics of research include: financial investment in land and agribusiness in Australia; the resilience of mainstream and civic food systems; social dimensions of the green economy; worldviews and the SDGs; and sustainable livelihoods and ethical trade. Kiah has conducted research in Australia and internationally, and has worked with NGOs and with the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development in Geneva. She is a Future Earth Fellow and the author of Ethical Trade, Gender and Sustainable Livelihoods.
Programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9am</td>
<td>Registration</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.15am – 9.45am</td>
<td>Welcome, introductions and overview</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.45am – 10.45am</td>
<td>Panel 1: Food System Challenges</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.45am – 11.15am</td>
<td>Morning tea</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.15am – 12.15pm</td>
<td>Panel 2: Local Responses</td>
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<td>12.15pm – 12.45pm</td>
<td>Organic, free range thinking session</td>
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<td>12.45pm – 1pm</td>
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Speakers

Ozgur Dedehayir, QUT  
Bree Devin, QUT  
Shona Hawkes, Oxfam  
Vaughan Higgins, Charles Sturt University,  
Hope Johnson, QUT  
Nicolette Larder, University of New England  
Joseph Macharia, QUT  
Amy MacMahon, University of Queensland  
Joel Orchard, Farmer and Food Activist  
Robert Pekin, Food Connect Foundation  
Lisa Schubert, University of Queensland  
Thor Svensen, Sovereign Foods  
Robin Taubenfeld, Friends of the Earth  
Helen Vidgen, QUT  
Charlie Wayment, Youth Food Movement
Abstracts

Dr Ozgur Dedehayir, Senior Research Fellow, Business School, QUT
If the vegan diet holds the key, then why are we so reluctant?

The meat and dairy industry accounts for a significant part of the global food production problem. 33% of the planet’s arable land is used to grow crops for animal feed, 70% of the planet’s agricultural land is devoted to livestock production, and 18% of global greenhouse gas emissions are attributed to animal agriculture. While attention has been afforded to technological solutions for increasing land use efficiency and reducing harmful emissions – hence, ‘supply-side’ solutions – it is important to seek solutions also from the ‘demand-side’, in other words, from the consumers themselves. Could veganism offer such a solution? At least a report released by the UN in 2010 suggests so. But what is holding society back from transitioning to a largely plant-based diet? This presentation reviews the barriers to the diffusion of vegan products in the mainstream market, and proposes a set of strategies that could accelerate this diffusion.

Dr Bree Devin, Lecturer, Public Relations, QUT
Shifting responsibility for food waste whilst still being ‘socially responsible’.

At a time when one billion people globally experience hunger, as much as 50% of all food produced - up to two billion metric tonnes - is thrown away every year. In Australia alone, as much as 44 million tonnes of food is wasted annually. In light of such troubling statistics, we must ask ourselves: Why is so much food wasted, and what can we do about it? Is food rescue the answer? To help answer these questions, I will focus on the powerful role that retailers play when it comes to food waste, and will draw on research highlighting a number of tensions and contradictions resulting from supermarkets’ bids to lower their own food waste.

Shona Hawkes, Oxfam Brisbane
Getting off our cloud: Reconnecting community and land

At the heart of the colonial project was creating ways of being and seeing the world that distanced us from the land and the rights of land-based cultures. This cultural legacy is a key barrier in addressing issues in our food system premised on a disconnect between food and place. It drives land grabs and environmental degradation. This talk highlights various examples in Australia of community-led land reform: From planting out the verge, to using food festivals as a land rights protection strategy, to defending the rights of nature. It also asks where does land fit in creating a more equitable food system - in particular for marginalised people denied secure access to land in our cities?

Associate Professor Vaughan Higgins, Inst. For Land, Water and Society, Charles Sturt University
Fair Food and the Politics of Calculation: Can Metrics Contribute to a Fairer and more Sustainable Food System?

Metrological techniques of measurement and calculation are being used increasingly by private sector agri-food actors to quantify eco-efficiency, and as a way of demonstrating sustainability and social justice credentials. These efforts have in many cases been criticised by scholars and activists as a further example of corporate greenwashing. However, we argue that the growing use of sustainability metrics is more complex and ambiguous. Drawing on Andrew Barry’s work on the politics of
calculation, we contend that metrological techniques of measurement and calculation “restrict political controversy in the economic field” but they also “provide the basis for an opening up of new objects and sites of disagreement” (Barry, 2002: 274). This may generate different possibilities at the local level for building a fairer food system. We assess the extent to which metrics might be used to help build a fairer system, while at the same time recognising the ways in which metrics can also extend corporate control.

**Dr Hope Johnson, Lecturer and Researcher, Law, QUT**

**Lessons from Local Food Ordinances**

Tension between alternative and industrial food systems is growing with the development of local food ordinances within broader legal frameworks that suit large-scale, complicated food chains. From 2011 onwards, 18 towns in Maine, USA adopted versions of a Local Food and Self-Governance Ordinance with municipalities in Vermont, Massachusetts and California following suit. These ordinances essentially declare that citizens have the right to produce, process, sell, purchase and consume local foods and remain independent from industrialised food systems. In particular, the ordinances exempt local food producers and processors from state license and inspection laws as long as the sales are between the producer or processor and the patron for home consumption. My talk will consider the function and legality of such local food ordinances and the potential for similar local food regulation in Brisbane.

**Dr Nicolette Larder, Lecturer, Geography, University of New England**

**What role for urban and regional planning in a food just society?**

Town planning has long been concerned with issues of justice. Indeed the profession has its genesis in rapidly industrialising London in the late 1800s where poor living conditions and health problems among citizens drove a profession that to this day is focused on providing pleasant, equitable, sustainable and ethical settlements for the population. Given the inequities in the current food system and the close relationship between food production, food access and land use planning, what role might urban and regional planning play in bringing about a food just society? How do current planning laws and regulations encourage/discourage food just settlements? How do practicing planners understand their role as food justice advocates? How might society benefit from the inclusion of the notion of food justice in the planning lexicon? This paper offers more questions than answers but aims to stimulate conversations around food and planning already started within our communities.

**Joseph Macharia, PhD student, Business School, QUT**

**Information Mediated Technologies in supporting food supply chains in Kenya: Mkulima Young Case study.**

Small scale coffee farmers in Kenya receive very little income for their efforts in toiling and harvesting the raw coffee beans. Historically, coffee was considered to be a cash crop and able to provide small-scale farmers with a reasonable income. Corruption with coffee cooperatives along with trade liberalisation which led to the development of additional coffee mills led to farmers earning significantly less from their annual coffee crop. During my childhood, the income from coffee was sufficient to cover school fees and allowed people to make investments in property (construction of house/business dwellings). Fast forward to today and small-scale coffee farmers are uprooting their coffee trees to try their luck in horticulture and dairy. Small-scale coffee farmers in Kenya have never tried a cappuccino and have no idea of the amount of money that people in the developed world pay for a single cup of coffee which is equivalent to the amount that they get paid for 4 kilograms of raw coffee beans. A fair food system needs to support small-scale famers to live a reasonable life from the sale of
produce grown on their farms. Mkulima Young meaning Young Farmer in Swahili was formed in 2013 with the aim of inspiring and supporting young farmers through a variety of online platforms. In 2015 Mkulima Young launched a mobile application which allows small-scale farmers to post and sell their produce online eliminating the middle man. The small-scale, rain fed are hindered entry into marketing farm produce to the supermarkets that have established a threshold capital vector for entrance Mkulima Young is a good study case study of an ICT-enabled innovation that provides an online platform that enables farmers access to market and consumers to access fresh produce improving local community welfare. The Network is a type of e-commerce specialised for fair food enterprises and fair food eaters. Like all good online systems it creates the connections that make things happen.

Amy MacMahon, PhD Candidate, UQ
Tactical Urbanism for a Fair Food System

'Tactical urbanism’ describes small-scale actions designed to improve the liveability, sustainability and ethicality of our cities. Typically, tactical urbanism movements have focused on issues around infrastructure and urban planning - the loss of green space and community hubs, and increasing commercialisation of public spaces. There is great potential, however, to apply these ideas to food systems, and consider how local food sovereignty, enacted through tactical urbanism, might effect broader change. I focus on three examples from Brisbane: the Reclaim the Bin Movement, Permablitzing and verge gardens. Each work to blur the boundaries of public and private space, community and government responsibility, and highlight failures in conventional food systems. The challenge for these movements, however, is to find ways to build changes in legislative and commercial structures, which allow for ongoing community ownership, while ensuring that governments don’t further abdicate responsibility for public goods to communities and to the private sector.

Joel Orchard, Farmer and Food Activist
Facilitating Fair Food in Northern New South Wales

Joel is a new school farmer, food systems activist, passionate advocate for young farmers and networker based in the Northern New South Wales. His interests are in exploring the social sustainability of local food production and tackling the issue of an ageing farmer population. His aims are to establish co-operative enterprise opportunities for young farmers and to develop the ecological agriculture industry for our region. Joel has been instrumental in establishing Future Feeders, a young farmers hub, peer support and community farming program based primarily at the Mullumbimby Community Gardens. He has been active founding member of the capacity building organisation - the Northern Rivers Young Farmers Alliance and is also a founding member of the Byron Region Food Sovereignty Network. He is currently developing Northern Rivers FEED: a regional ecological agriculture participatory guarantee system as an alternative to third party certification. Joel will talk about his activities as both a first generation farmer and community fair food facilitator and how they contribute to building a fairer food system in his region.
Robert Pekin, Food Connect, Brisbane
Brisbane’s Own Food: Food Sovereignty for South East Queensland

Last year, Food Connect worked with an honours student in Environmental Management and Sustainability to undertake a small research project to find out where Brisbane should really be getting its food from. The principles of Food Sovereignty underpinned the research, which asserts that eaters and growers (and all those along the value chain) should self-determine their food system that aligns with ecological and cultural principles. The research proposed an ideal food system through four strategic lenses of Social Justice, Human Health, Ecology and Economics, and created a draft Brisbane Food Plan that included 13 produce categories, across six geographical zones, and provided five key outcomes for sourcing and implementation. One solution for facilitating food sovereignty in the SEQ region is proposed through the development of regional Food Hubs. Proposed governance and open design processes will be discussed in the context of Food Connect’s evolving experiences over the past twelve years.

Dr Lisa Schubert, Lecturer and Researcher, UQ School of Public Health
Why a fairer food system supports a healthier food system

The discipline of public health is concerned with patterns of health and disease at a population level, with health equity, and the conditions in society that promote health and wellbeing. Increasingly ecological public health perspectives are being embraced to illuminate underlying causes of health and disease. When we consider all the activities involved in getting our food to us, there are now identified broad-reaching consequences for public health including health and wellbeing of agricultural and other workers in the food system, environmental health consequences of industrial food production, processing, distribution and waste, food insecurity and population dietary patterns. We have the choice to deal with these consequences by considering isolated downstream contributing factors, one problem at a time, or the alternative – to recognize how the interests of profit-driven and powerful food system players have marginalised voices concerned with supporting healthy communities and healthy people. Fairer and more sustainable food systems are a public health imperative.

Thor Svensen, Sovereign Foods, Brisbane
Lessons from the new Co-operative movement in South East Queensland

Over the past five years, the new co-operative movement in Brisbane has worked to ensure access to ethical food regardless of a person’s social economic status. It has been done without reducing incomes to the producers, and has facilitated a new way of perceiving our supply chain. As this movement has grown, there have been people-driven solutions to problems that will ensure people’s ethical access to food will not be driven purely by economic means, while also creating a new economic market based on ethics for producers around Australia. This period of time has been a steep learning curve. There has been a need to create ways of circumventing the existing long supply chains, financial institutions, as well as technical limitations. This presentation will give a quick overview on the methods used by these groups to undermine the status quo of the dominant productivist food system and discuss the beginnings to push this movement into the mainstream while building the infrastructure to ensure its longevity.
Robin Taubenfeld, Friends of the Earth
Who wants to keep Aussies in the dark about food irradiation?

As an off-shoot of the “Atoms for Peace” program of the 1950s, food irradiation has a long and controversial history, remaining unpopular with the public, despite being approved for limited use in many countries. Public outcry saw a 10-year moratorium placed on irradiation in Australia in 1989. The moratorium was lifted in 1999, with little public awareness. Australia and New Zealand have since seen a slow, yet consistent, progression towards government approval of an irradiated diet. FSANZ has consistently demonstrated industry bias in its application and assessment processes, its loose labelling guidelines and in the material it publishes on irradiation. FSANZ is even forcing food to be irradiated at unnecessarily high doses. The irradiation of cat food is illegal in Australia; the list of approved foods for humans is expanding. Now mandatory labelling could be removed. Who wants to keep us in the dark about irradiation – and why?

Dr Helen Vidgen, Senior Research Fellow, Nutrition and Dietetics, QUT
Describing healthy eating in a fair food system

Nutrition science has been redefined to describe ‘the study of food systems, foods and drinks, and their nutrients and other constituents; and of their interactions within and between all relevant biological, social and environmental systems’. In other words, the contemporary study of nutrition must involve the study of food systems. Conversely, the study of food systems includes the consideration of nutrition. Earlier this year the United Nations Assembly announced the Decade of Nutrition. This is in recognition of the global impact of poor diets on the burden of disease. This presentation will describe what we know about the diets of the world, their relationship to food systems and what a fair food system means for global health.

Charlie Wayment, Youth Food Movement, Brisbane
Young people: The vanguard of a fairer food system?

The challenges facing the food system are arguably worsening, and seeming more complex as our understanding of them deepens. Young people aged 18-35 have a pivotal role to play in transitioning to a fairer food system through approaching these challenges in a novel manner. They are driving a generational groundswell of support for fairer food outcomes, creating change across the food system. Millennials are adopting and promoting sustainable diets, increasing organic, local and urban food production, and demanding news ways of engaging with food producers, processors and retailers. This presentation covers the role of young people in the transition to a fairer food system, highlighting some recent Australian and international examples. A brief snapshot of the fair food system that young people are co-creating is also presented.
Thank you to our Fair Food Caterers

The organisers of this event would like to acknowledge and promote the good work of the Nundah Community Enterprises Cooperative who provide employment for people with intellectual disabilities and mental health issues.