



# How can we resource our communities to transition beyond food parcels and social supermarket to create a food secure Aotearoa?

In a productive land where we have the expertise to produce award winning beef, lamb, wine, milk powder, cheese, apples, kiwifruit and more it seems unreal that between 15–20 % of our people in Aotearoa New Zealand experience moderate to severe food insecurity in an ongoing way.<sup>1</sup> This population cannot access enough food to feed their whānau or themselves in a way that enables them to carry out their daily activities.<sup>2</sup>

Whilst the pandemic has increased the level of food insecurity in Aotearoa New Zealand, food insecurity was present in Aotearoa long before the pandemic came to our shores. The forces that drive food insecurity remain present. These include colonisation, racism, gender inequality, low wages, high costs of living, and a broken food system. While we, as a society, still strive to meet the hunger experienced within our communities, our lack of ability to address the root causes is seeing a steady increase in those going hungry.

Food security is an entrenched problem in Aotearoa New Zealand. Realising food security and enabling sustainable food systems should be a priority.

Aotearoa New Zealand is a generous community, and we are incredible at responding to the needs of our neighbours, whānau and friends. Our response to the level of hunger being experienced in our communities has been to share what we have with others, largely through creating foodbanks, Pātaka kai and other community food responses.

In a food producing country that is prosperous and cares for its population foodbanks should not need to exist. But foodbanks in their current form have existed since the late 1980s, with the demand on their services increasing each decade. This is an indication, not of how generous we are, but of how many of our systems are broken, including our food system.

Foodbanks long for the day that our current level of food assistance in Aotearoa is no longer needed, they can shut their doors and go home. However, it will take focused time, effort and resource from all sectors to make this a reality.

**How do we move beyond the foodbank and social supermarket:** Our recent paper 'Realising Food Secure Communities in Aotearoa' points to the role of local food economies in helping create food secure communities. Local food economies need to sit in balance with our export commitments and opportunities, as well as the role our supermarket system plays. Our recent paper points to:

## Five barriers to local food security:

1. Profit driven industrial food systems.
2. Over-regulated 'good' food and under-regulated 'bad' food
3. Time-poor low-income populations with high costs of living
4. Disconnection of people from their food resulting in poor health outcomes
5. The impact of the current food systems on the environment and sustainability.



## And five opportunities to create local food security:

1. Local and national food strategies and policies
2. The involvement of mana whenua. The role of mātauranga Māori – as our unique gift to the world
3. Fair wages and flexible working conditions
4. Regulations to support local food economies
5. Recognising the connection between kai and health.<sup>3</sup> Policies and regulations to support healthy food environments and limit fast food, especially in low-income areas.



*“The transformation to local sustainable food systems envisioned by localities aligns with high-level international evidence of promising food security.”*

Food security for Aotearoa is not about whether there is enough food in Aotearoa. There is plenty.

Food security is about choosing to change our regulatory and economic frameworks to ensure those on low incomes, in predominantly single parent families, of Māori and Pasifika descent do not struggle to access enough affordable nutritious, sustainably source, culturally appropriate food. A food secure Aotearoa is possible.

As Aotearoa New Zealand wrestle with many important issues in the lead up to the 2023 general election Kore Haikai would like to pose a few questions to potential parliamentary candidates:

1. *What level of commitment does your party have to ensure our whole population is food secure?*
2. *Acknowledging at the root causes of food insecurity in Aotearoa being systemic – about our economic system and our food system, what would your party implement to begin working towards a food secure Aotearoa New Zealand?*

We hope this paper and questions can be a resource during the pre-election period as you engage in conversations with candidates and community.

<sup>1</sup> [Now we are Twelve: The Growing Up in New Zealand research report](#) notes that food insecurity is strongly associated with ethnicity and socioeconomic position. [The 2023 Child Poverty Related Indicators report](#) notes that, while rates have improved substantially overall from 2019 to 2022, Tamariki Māori (at 22%) and Pacific children (38%) face rates of insecurity far higher than Pakeha (9%).

<sup>2</sup> The [UN definition from the World Food Summit, 1996](#) says “Food security exists when all people at all times have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.”

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.zerohunger.org.nz/realising-food-secure-communities-aotearoa>