

Te Whāngai i ngā Whetū: Feeding the Stars

Online Academic Symposium on Food Security

Thursday 8 July, 10 – 12.30pm

Summary from Breakout Group Discussions

Breakout Session One (following Dr Sarah Gerritsen's presentation)

Comments / observations

- The level of food insecurity amongst children number is unacceptable / ridiculous. Outraged by the impact of food insecurity on children.
- Multiple groups commented on the dynamic nature of food insecurity that the Growing Up in New Zealand (GUINZ) research highlighted. Comments included:
 - Really useful data on exposure to food insecurity over time – and very concerning;
 - Shows complexity of measuring food insecurity; exposes limitations of 'snapshot' measures;
 - Demonstrates the fragility of family life / vulnerability of many people – it doesn't take much to tip them into food insecurity (as COVID-19 has demonstrated).
- There is a significant group who are still whakama (ashamed) about asking for help.
- Things that seem unconnected are connected (e.g. lack of transport, fruit and vege markets, food storage facilities, kitchens and fridges, emergency accommodation).
- Lockdown showed importance of basics such as cooking skills, budgeting, meal planning etc.
- Noted Elaine Rush's research into health impacts from insecurity in first years of life – deprivation in pregnancy and early life results in skeletal impacts at 16yrs.
- Also need to look at broader health impacts (e.g. mental health) of food insecurity.
- University of Auckland research on cost of healthier diets has highlighted time poverty issues alongside material cost issues of improving family nutrition.
- People with disabilities face additional access issues, and some solutions (e.g. growing food) aren't always practical for this group.

Suggestions

- It is crucial to broaden / expand the UN definition to include the impacts of environment / context on food insecurity and the importance of autonomy / choice.
- It's essential to take a multifaceted approach to addressing food insecurity (e.g. tackling housing crisis; increasing benefits, removing taxes on healthy food, addressing role of supermarkets in bumping up prices)
- Different parts of society having different roles to play, and relationship building is key to achieving food security.

- Food is deeply connected to social justice / social issues - systems and policy changes are ultimately needed in order to address these wider issues.
- Need policies to ensure good quality food. Work being done to change food formulations. Looking at availability.
- A number of breakout groups made suggestions related to measurement:
 - We urgently need better measures of food security;
 - We need good, long term research (like Growing up in New Zealand) to give a good base to our knowledge of food insecurity;
 - However, others said that we have a solid and growing set of data that shows us the real need, we now need the focus to be on intervention.
 - Work underway to look at whenua measures (for support Māori to take charge of their own food sources / systems)

Questions (including potential areas for further research)

- Would like to know more about protective factors against food insecurity.
- Interested in know more about what causes people to move in and out of food insecurity. What are the drivers (e.g. income, environment as key drivers) and what levers should be being pulled?

Breakout Session Two (following Christina McKercher's presentation)

Comments / observations

- Heartened by the number of Māori who report gathering kai or being connected to traditional kai. This is something we can build on through systems change.
- Christina's presentation really contextualized the topic: wider role of colonisation and globalization; NZ as producer of primary products. Other related comments were:
 - Noted how much food Aotearoa produces and how we shouldn't have a food insecurity issue;
 - Felt overwhelmed by the scale and complexity of the systems (e.g. the globalised food system);
 - Need acknowledgement of long-term impacts of colonisation and racism, and how these underpin food security challenges;
 - Everything returns to the impact of the loss of land and the loss of sovereignty;
 - Its increasingly urgent to have transparency across all aspects of the food system.
- Appalled by racist cartoons. Food has become politicised and 'racialised' – this ignores that the issues are about wider food systems.
- Highlights the challenge of being part of a self-perpetuating system, while looking to push for systemic change.
- Need to address the power imbalances that exist in the food system.
- Significant harm caused to the food system (especially Māori food systems) by human actions (sewerage, deep sea drilling) and regulations (water rights, RMA, Council unitary authority / spatial plans).
- Food safety laws are a barrier to food security (e. g. farmers are scared to give away food in case they are prosecuted).

- Concept of food sovereignty is preferred over food security.
- It's not just about food: manaakitanga, whanaunatanga, kaitiakitanga all important. In a whānau ora approach, food comes with aroha.

Suggestions

- Groups made the need for community-led solutions. E.g.:
 - Rather than blaming individuals, this is a community and wider social issue – need to support and promote community-level change (similar to the approach to phasing out single use plastics).
 - Relationships, partnerships and empowering communities are key (e.g. Auckland City Mission partners with marae, to allow them to lead/determine assistance in their own community).
 - The importance of community led initiatives and self-determination on food security.
 - Should consider paying people in kind for volunteer work for community gardens.
- We need to find ways to connect people and thinking, stop being isolationist.
- Also many comments supporting Māori-led responses to achieve food sovereignty / security:
 - Maori political responses take back control of food systems;
 - Let Maori lead the way – Maori know how to fix food insecurity and to feed the people but Pakeha and systems get in the way;
 - Need to value traditional ways of gathering food - help people reconnect with these and with the land. Not just about food but also benefits for cultural identity;
 - Liked the idea of mara kai as protest, political (e.g. Parihaka);
 - There is a real opportunity for Maori to lead the response to climate change.
- Look forward to the wide dissemination of the body of knowledge that Christina referred to.

Questions

- How do we redress the huge impacts of colonisation on Maori food systems and food insecurity?
- To what extent are we prioritizing GDP over local control over kai, iwi and hapū authority?
- Would like to know more about how to avoid 'racialising' the food insecurity problem?
- What is the right balance in adopting approaches that increase strengths (knowledge, capability, connections) and those that tackle deficits (e.g. poor housing, lack of financial resources)?
- What is a te ao Māori response to the large-scale need present in the large cities?
- How do we awahi Māori, and support and allow them to tell their stories, celebrate their successes (not just highlight negative statistics)?

Breakout Session 3 (following Professor Louise Signal's presentation)

Comments / observations

- Comments on the systems 'map' that Louise outlined:
 - Good to see the system thinking / analysis – brings clarity to this space. Combined both the other contributions and put them together in a nice way;
 - Would like to spend more time with the 'map' as it sets out the problem well and illustrates complexity;
 - Answered some of the original questions re: drivers, factors + opportunities.
- Comments on aspects of the system that perpetuate food insecurity:
 - Unaware of how bad fringe lending was and impact on whānau. Good to hear progress being made.
 - Crucial to see food industry as part of this system and address issues such as the supermarket duopoly, production system and supply chain issues.
 - Some people have food available but not the equipment to cook it.
 - Food parcels often contain a lot of random food which doesn't really make a meal.
 - Current systems reflect colonial way of thinking. For example, we've bought into trade deals that perpetuate inequalities and food insecurity.
- The lack of government leadership is frustrating (no government strategy, or Ministerial lead).
- Concern that the literature is city-based and makes a lot of assumptions (e.g. food producers and businesses are not spoken to).
- A number of comments on role of academic community in supporting change in this space (in response to a prompt question):
 - Academics need to work to come together around food and link up areas of research / interest / change Academics could talk with those at the frontline;
 - Need to be connected, not talking to the converted;
 - Academia can identify political issues rather than just personal issues – e.g. use of foodbanks is political not just personal;
 - Academic community is able to provide coordinated messaging - has an advocacy role and messaging role;
 - Engage in participatory action research and community-led research - work with communities to build opportunities for change;
 - Health economists could / should make the economic case for change to our food system;
 - How can academics challenge the influence of big food and agriculture industry players?
 - Can academics do better at reducing stigma - race, body size, income levels, so that we don't contribute to negative stereotypes?
 - Government needs to reach out to academia, academia needs to reach in;

Suggestions

- Because the problem is so complex / 'wicked', we need to work more collaboratively, and we need good leadership.
- We need to really think about how we share this knowledge with the wider NZ public.

- We currently speak different languages (terminology / approaches) - we need to find a common language and common goals.
- There's a sense of fatigue with talk and desire for action.
- Resourcing needs to be rationalized - lots of good ideas but not enough people or financial resource.
- Households need to be empowered with more money.
- Others commented that just providing more financial resource to someone is not a solution – need to address deeper issues (e.g. transient housing and living).
- Children's and indigenous rights should be central to our analysis of and responses to food insecurity.
- Reduction and redistribution of food waste is part of the solution.
- Reference to iwi-developed food systems/ sources as a solution - iwi have these already, but they are not recognised or valued (e.g. rights to Mahinga Kai).
- There are values inherent in our choices around food (who gets it and who doesn't it), we can lead with a values response too.
- There was a discussion about the role of government and the need for a 'Ministry of Kai':
 - Need Government intervention and systems change.
 - There are cross-government groups working in this space, but there's a need for greater engagement from this group with the wider community and greater transparency of what they are doing;
 - Government could better support a more diverse economy / alternatives outside the mainstream economic models (e.g. cooperatives, pan-tribal economic development that provide jobs & kai);
 - If Maori were in charge of running NZ there would be a Ministry of Kai, which would take a whole of system approach - lets create this;
 - The Minister of Food Safety should be Minister of Food instead;
 - Need Crown to work more effectively with Māori to support them to self-govern their own food sources and systems.

Questions

- What would it take to update the study Louise spoke to?