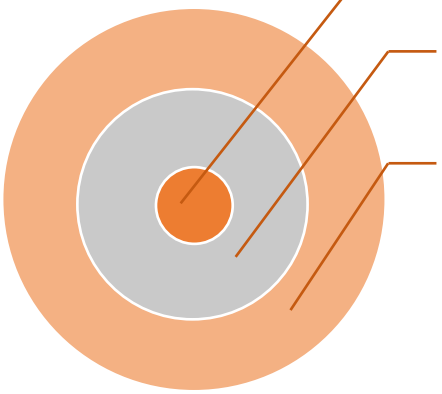
New Zealand's Food System Pathway

Purpose

The United Nations Food Systems Summit (the Summit) will be held during the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in New York on September 23, setting the stage for global food systems transformation to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. This document outlines New Zealand's food systems pathway to contribute to the SDGs.

This document is structured in three parts:



1 Our destination: where we want New Zealand's food system to be by 2030, both in terms of New Zealand's national objectives for its food system and how this can support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

2 Our tools to get there: key levers and actions that New Zealand, including central government, local authorities, Treaty partners, industry, non-governmental organisations, and the public, that are available to help us reach our destination.

3 How we travel: the factors that will make New Zealand's food systems pathway possible, such as sound evidence, collaboration, innovation and investment.

1. Our destination

Our destination is a food system that improves the wellbeing of New Zealanders and contributes to the achievement of the United Nations' SDGs. To do this, New Zealand is focused on developing opportunities to improve the health, environmental, social, and economic outcomes of our food system.

This aligns with New Zealand's wider strategic framework and our focus on wellbeing through the Wellbeing Budgets and the Living Standards Framework. The Living Standards Framework applies a wellbeing approach across government, most notable during investment decisions as part of the national budget i.e. Wellbeing Budgets. The Framework is based on four capitals and 12 wellbeing domains[1]. These four components of wellbeing – financial, human, natural, and social capital – are central to our plan for building a more productive, sustainable, and inclusive food system and economy.

2. Our tools to get there

Reaching our destination requires action across all of New Zealand, including by central government, local authorities, Treaty partners, industry, non-governmental organisations, and the public. This section explains some of the key tools and levers, and how they are a part of New Zealand's pathway.

Safeguarding Te Taiao

Food is core to New Zealand's identity; it is a key source of economic, social, and cultural wellbeing for our people, and we recognise the wellbeing of our natural environment (Te Taiao) is the foundation for our food production.

[1] Information on New Zealand's Living Standards Framework can be found here.

An example of this is *Fit for a Better World*, New Zealand's primary sector strategy which embraces the indigenous Māori concept of Te Taiao, a deep relationship of respect and reciprocity with the natural world. Through this Te Taiao lens, New Zealand has signalled our commitment to meet the greatest challenges humanity faces: rapidly moving to a low carbon emissions society, restoring the health of our water, reversing the decline in biodiversity, and at the same time feeding our people and many more people the world over in a way that aligns with our values.

Other initiatives occurring across New Zealand include: *Te Mana o te Taiao, the Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy 2020*[2], which will guide the way New Zealand works to protect and restore biodiversity; *reform of New Zealand's resource management system*[3] that aims to ensure our use of Te Taiao occurs within environmental limits that protect ecological integrity; as well as numerous initiatives by the private sector, the public and Māori such as through the *Jobs for Nature*[4] programme.

Promoting indigenous leadership in food systems

Food sovereignty is about protecting the right of Māori and all New Zealanders to eat healthy food from the land, waterways and oceans of New Zealand. Food system governance therefore needs to reflect the importance of the Crown Māori partnership, indigenous knowledge, participation, and leadership in food systems. For New Zealand, this means promoting the significant role of Māori in New Zealand's food sectors and the growth of Māori agribusiness. It also means acknowledging and addressing the challenges we are yet to overcome, such as working to find practical solutions that remove barriers to Māori success and leadership, and improve our government's partnership approach to decision making with Māori on food system matters.

This is one of New Zealand's game changing solutions, proposed through the Summit, to acknowledge and promote indigenous leadership in food systems.

Promoting open and inclusive trade

New Zealand's food system is interlinked with the global food system. New Zealand's *Trade for All*[5] strategy recognises the important role the link between local and global food systems play in supporting New Zealander's wellbeing and outlines how our trade should support economic prosperity, the environment and climate goals.

Further, the past 18 months has shown the critical importance of international trade and supply chains for food security and well-being. We know that open and less distortive trade is a key to eliminating hunger and lifting people out of poverty, as is reflected in the targets of SDG Two.

New Zealand views fair, open, and inclusive trade, and the elimination of trade distortive and environmentally harmful agricultural and fisheries subsidies, as central to delivering food and nutrition security globally. The world cannot reverse negative trends if at the same time we continue to actively fuel them with such subsidies.

Promoting access to nutritious foods

Poor diet and obesity are leading causes of potentially avoidable health loss in New Zealand resulting in significant inequity for Māori and Pacific people. The Government's programme of health reform aims to build a stronger health and disability system, with an increased focus on population health and equity.

---

[2] Information on Te Mana o te Taiao can be found here.
[3] Information on resource management reforms can be found here.
[4] Information on Jobs for Nature can be found here.
[5] Information on Trade for All can be found here here.

There are several Government led activities underway to address diet-related disease recognising that a population-based approach is needed that focuses on systems and settings, in addition to behavioural change at the individual and community level. Initiatives focus on four key areas: food reformulation, restricting advertising of unhealthy food to children, increasing healthy foods in schools and monitoring and evaluation of food and nutrition.[6]

Acting on climate change

New Zealand is committed to acting on climate change with domestic and international targets to reduce our greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Under the Paris Agreement, New Zealand has committed to limiting warming to well below 2°C, and to pursue efforts to limit warming to 1.5°C above preindustrial levels. The 1.5°C goal is also included in New Zealand's Climate Change Response Act (CCRA). To achieve this, action is occurring across all levels of government and industry, for example, the launch of the *Carbon Neutral Government Programme*[7] will require public sector agencies to measure and publicly report on their emissions and to offset any they can't cut by 2025.

Our food system will play a major role in our response, which is why specific targets for biogenic methane emissions are included within the CCRA[8]. Further to this, industry and the New Zealand Government are investing in programmes to develop new technologies and solutions to reduce agricultural GHG emissions in New Zealand and other countries[9].

Building resilience

New Zealand's food system needs to be resilient to system shocks, especially climate change and economic uncertainty, so that it can ensure wellbeing for current and future generations. Initiatives that will build our food system's resilience include the preparation of national adaptation plans under the CCRA; and the *Food, Beverage and Agritech Transformation Plans*[10].

3. How we travel

As the previous section shows, there are many tools and levers that are a part of our food systems pathway. However, their success will depend on how they are used. This section sets out the factors that will be critical to making this pathway possible.

Cohesive national policy and targets

Cohesive food systems policy is essential to provide clear national direction and governance. This was a recurring theme raised by participants of New Zealand's National Dialogues. New Zealand is initiating work to develop a shared, holistic cross-agency understanding of key outcomes for a sustainable food system for New Zealand, and how this can be measured.

Investment in sound evidence and innovation

Investment in food systems evidence and innovation is required to support New Zealand's food systems pathway. New Zealand is making significant investments into research, development and

---

[6] Information on the National Healthy Food and Drink Policy can be found here. Information on improving access to healthy food and drinks for children can be found here.

[7] Information on the Carbon Neutral Government Programme can be found here.

[8] Under the Climate Change Response Act New Zealand must achieve net zero emissions for all GHGs other than biogenic methane by 2050, and must reduce biogenic methane emissions by 24 to 47 per cent below 2017 levels by 2050, and 10 per cent below 2017 levels by 2030. These targets reflect what New Zealand's independent Climate Change Commission has deemed are feasible domestic emissions reductions by 2050.

[9] For example, in 2021, the Government committed an additional $24 million over four years towards agricultural GHG mitigation research and development.

[10] Information on the Food, Beverage and Agritech Industry transformation plans can be found here.

capacity building for GHG emissions reductions and adaptation, particularly for the agriculture sector.

For example, a key food systems priority for New Zealand is to raise global ambition to tackle agricultural greenhouse gas emissions. We recognise that through international collaboration we can greatly amplify the role of our small country in achieving global climate goals. New Zealand contributes significant funding and support to the Global Research Alliance on Agricultural Greenhouse Gases (GRA) to accelerate and connect mitigation research globally. Through the GRA, New Zealand expertise also contributes to building capability and capacity internationally to help make a significant global reduction in agricultural greenhouse gas emissions while improving food security.

Another example is through the *National Science Challenges*[11] that were established in 2014 and aim to tackle the biggest science-based issues and opportunities facing New Zealand. The Challenges bring together the country's top scientists to work collaboratively across disciplines, institutions and borders. Three Challenges in particular focus on food systems, High-Value Nutrition, Our Land Our Water, and Healthier Lives National Science Challenges. They are focused on enabling the production and productivity of New Zealand's primary sector, healthy food environments, while maintaining and improving the quality of the country's land and water, to become an exporter of high-value foods with scientifically proven health benefits.

These two Challenges are informed by insights into the needs of global consumers and are researching opportunities to develop foods that improve metabolic and digestive health, enhance immunity, and infant complementary feeding.

In addition, the New Zealand Government is backing initiatives to help reduce costs for farmers and growers and help achieve lower on-farm emissions. A national training programme will deliver more skilled farm advisers and an accelerator fund has been established to reduce biological emissions. This will fund and support targeted initiatives to significantly broaden the uptake of integrated farm planning.

Tailored solutions

Food systems are complex and varied, the challenges that New Zealand faces, and the right solutions to overcome them, will often be different to those in other parts of the world, such as the differing particular challenges of many of our Pacific neighbours. New Zealand strongly supports pragmatic, evidence-based approaches to food systems that are grounded in an understanding of what works under which circumstances, and with which trade-offs, in different geographical and cultural contexts.

We recognise that there is often no one-size-fits-all solution to achieving more sustainable food systems, and that instead we need to apply robust evidence-based and context-relevant policy approaches to understand the transitions required. For example, it is not as simple as declaring one food type less sustainable than another without assessing the sustainability of its production system and life cycle. New Zealand is investing in life cycle assessment research to generate data on the environmental performance of diverse food production and processing. In addition, New Zealand is participating in a FAO project to develop best-practice consistency in life cycle assessment methodologies.

[11] Information on National Science Challenges can be found here.

Collaboration

Finally, collaboration is critical to the success of New Zealand's food system pathway as there are a multitude of diverse organisations and people involved. There are many examples of food systems collaboration occurring across New Zealand. One example is the New Zealand Government working with industry and Māori through the He *Waka Eke Noa Primary Sector Climate Action Partnership*[12]. This aims to give farmers and growers the support they need to measure and reduce their GHG emissions and develop a farm-level pricing mechanism for agricultural emissions by 2025. This is to enable sustainable food and fibre production for future generations. He Waka Eke Noa is working towards all farmers and growers knowing their on-farm emissions and developing a emissions reduction pathway.

[12] Information on He Waka Eke Noa can be found here.