



Local farmers

Why is it important to support local farmers?

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.

What are the 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 farmers just starting out, and the opportunity to diversify crops and value-add for greater returns.

For Communities

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.

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.

Connecting with our Food

Buying local food keeps us in touch with the seasons – which means we are eating foods when they are at their peak in flavour and abundance.

We also get to know “the story” of our food – about the people who have grown it, their farming methods and their farm.

Buying local and seasonal helps us to be inventive in the kitchen – trying new produce, valuing the whole animal, preserving in times of abundance and celebrating when our favourite foods come into season.

The Environment

Our present industrialised food system, involving transporting food long distances, is dependent on the artificially low energy prices that come with “cheap oil”. Supporting local food systems generally means less energy, emissions, and food miles are associated with our food.

Where can I start?

Depending on where you live, and what's available in your area – there are a few places to start:

Farmers' Markets

Farmers' Markets are predominantly a fresh food market that operates regularly within a community, at a focal public location that provides a suitable environment for farmers and food producers to sell farm-origin and value-added artisan food products directly to customers.

Search the internet for Farmers Markets in your area or visit

www.farmersmarkets.org.au/markets

Fresh Food Box Schemes

Delicious, seasonal food is sourced from local farmers and delivered each week to a central hub by the farmers or small freight companies. Here it's packed into various sized boxes depending on the week's orders, before being delivered to a network of local collection points (families, schools or community centres).

Customers then pick-up their box from their local collection point on the pre-arranged date and time and get the chance to meet like-minded people and neighbours for a chat.

Alternatively, depending on where you live, some boxed systems are delivered direct to your door or are collected from the farm.

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)

CSAs are still a relatively new socio-economic model of food production, sales and distribution. They involve the creation of a direct relationship between producers and consumers resulting in a mutual gain relationship.

CSAs are best suited to small, independent, labour intensive, family farms.

In the basic model, CSA members are actively involved in the production process, providing a form of direct financing through advance purchase of shares, and assisting with distribution by picking up their shares.

For more information on the CSA model or a toolkit on how to start one visit

www.csatoolkit.channelliving.org.au

Your local green grocer or supermarket

Not everyone has easy access to a farmers' market, box scheme or CSA. If this is true for you, you can still help support Australian farmers by reading the signs where you shop, or asking the grocer about where they source the produce. By talking to the grocer and asking for local produce, you are using your purchasing power to influence what is available.

Try buying local first, look for seasonal produce, or at very least buy Australian and support agricultural within your country.

Suggestions for further reading and viewing

Local Harvest - Finding good food close to you...

www.localharvest.org.au

Helping Farmers Sell Direct

www.greens.org.au/helping-farmers-sell-direct
